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Jainism - Gopani (1989)

Cārvāka (fragment)

Nyaya Sutra (6th century BC to 2nd century CE)

Silanka accounts of Ajñana critique of omniscience

Brahma sutras (400-450 CE)

Nandlal Sinha discovering the Samkhya argument against an eternal self-cause God

Samkhya-karika (200 CE and the school Smakhya originated ~1,000 BC to 600 BC) (commentary)

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad by Yajnavalkya (9th to 6th century BC) (early atheistic views)

Mundaka Upanishad (early example of pantheism)

Chandogya Upanishad - The Udgitha of the Dogs (8th to 6th century BC) (satire)

The Rig Veda/Mandala 10/Hymn 130 (the first or at least the oldest atheist or atheistic literature ever)

Rig Veda, Nasadiya Sukta (1,700 BC – 1,100 BC) (Agnosticism)

Yogaśāstra (12th Century)

Jinasena in Mahāpurāna (9th Century)

The Buddha Teaches Deities (Summaries)

Gautama Buddha (563-400 BC)

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Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra (350-400 CE) Vasubandhu (4th to 5th century

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Steven Weinberg description of the first philosopher, scientist and mathematician (Thales)

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Epicurus (341–270 BC) (various quotes)

Aristotle (384-322 BC) refutation of Plato’s Demiurge/The Good and Theory of Forms (Metaphysics) – Deism

Immanuel Kant – On Ciritique of Pure Reason

David Hume – On Miracles

Baron d’Holbach – The System of Nature or, the Laws of the Moral and Physical World (Of Theism.—Of the System of Optimism.—Of final Causes)

Matthias Knutzen (1646-1674) - A conversation between a latin host and three guests of different religions held at altona, not far from hamburg (the first atheist/anarchist literature that survive in its entirely “fiction”)

Lucretius (99-55 BC) – On The Nature of Things (nothing exists per se except atoms and the void)

Kazimierz Łyszczyński - On the non-existence of God (1634-1689)

Etienne Dolet (1509-1546)

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

Niccolo Machiavelli – The Prince (1469-1527)

Treaties of the Three Imposters by Frederick II - Chapter I: Of God (1235) (Epicurean deist)

Frederick II the Holy Roman Emperor and the first modern ruler (1194-1250)

Theophrastus Redivivus (1600-1700)

Sextus Empiricus (160-210 CE) – Outlines of Pyrrhonism, Book III Chapter III

Lao Tzu (601-531 BC)

Confucius (551-479 BC)

Michel Montaigne – Essays (where he express his atheism "edited various quotes") (1533-1592)

Hrafnkell (10th century)

Baruch Spinoza - Tractatus Theologico-Politicus

Baruch Spinoza - A Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being (1632-1677) (pantheism)

Abu Isa al-Warraq (889-994)

Omar Khayyam (1048-1131)

Al-Maʿarri (973–1057)

Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (865-925)

Ibn al-Rawandi (827-880)

Djad ibn Dirham (715-724)

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Naïve Realism by Hilary Putnam

Evil and Omnipotence by J. L. Mackie

Ego and It's Own by Max Stirner

God and the State by Mikhail Bakunin

Enquiry Concerning Political Justice by William Godwin

What is an Atheist? By Sylvian Marechal

Being and Nothingness by Jean Paul Sartre

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Friedrich Nietzsche

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Attitudes toward the Disabled by Michael Moore

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Is the Biblical Yahweh actually a dragon? By draconic chronicler

Is There Adequate Empirical Evidence for Reincarnation? An Analysis of Ian Stevenson'sWork by Leonard Angel

Objections to Karma and Rebirth An Introduction by Ingrid Hansen Smythe

Is There Life After Death?: A Review of the Supporting Evidence by David Lester (The Myth of the Afterlife a Case against life after death)

Why Survival is Metaphysically Impossible by Raymond D. Bradley

Is Intentionality a Cardinal Problem for Physicalism? By Keith Parsons

There is No Such Thing as a Necessary Being by AntiCitizenX

The Problem of Omnipotence by AntiCitizenX

Evolutionary Absurdity Against Naturalism by AntiCitizenX

The Transcendental Argument for the Nonexistence of God by Michael Martin Positive

Atheism and the Meaninglessness of Theism (1999) by Michael Martin

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The Argument from the Existence of Nondeities (2013) by Horia Plugaru

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PROVING THE NON-EXISTENCE OF GOD by John L. Pollock

God's Non-Existence: A Reply to Mr. Rainer and Mr. Hughes by J. N. Findlay

Can God's Existence be Disproved? By J. N. Findlay

Miracles and God: A Reply to Robert A. H. Larmer

Miracles as Evidence Against the Existence of God by Christine Overall

The Atheist named Richard Swinburne by Bradley Bowen

God Would Not Perform Miracles By Matt McCormick

Physicalism, or Something Near Enough by Jaegwon Kim (Physicalism at a Crossroads)

A Critique of Thomas Aquinas by Paul Edwards

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Logical Point of View: Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays by Willard Van Orman Quine

The People Who Inspire My Thinking

I already briefly explain in my Failures of Religion and Failures of Politics that for the past 7 years and more that I have change my position many times when I abandoned my original position of the Roman Catholic faith and abandoned my political position of Classical Liberalism (lesser extent Right Libertarian and to even lesser extent Liberal Conservatism).

Even when I embrace agnosticism and political centrism I wanted to believe in the supernatural so for the majority of my philosophical journey I try to learn religion and spirituality, I try to read or watch (documentaries, lectures, videos and etc.) about mysticism, supernatural, esotericism,

magic, ghost stories, ghost hunting, peoples personal religious experiences and family members personal miracle stories and even when I was first introduce about philosophy reading Plato and Aristotle (specifically Apologies, Republic, Laws and Metaphysics) then I try to read religious literature more specifically Hindu and Buddhist literature like various essays on Zen Buddhism, Rig Veda, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata and various other literature to rationality believe in god like Meditation by Rene Descartes, Summa Theologica by Thomas Aquinas and various arguments for the existence of god.

Despite I was self-taught about topics that should be taught in an academic setting but I live were people either don't care or reject philosophy and science and rely almost purely on religious faith, common sense and the only thing that I would consider philosophy among the people in my life is Naïve Realism were superstition, priest interpreting dreams and claiming it as miracles or divine intervention, people who claim or know someone who is a witch that can see the future/make prophecy, people claim that they can speak with the dead/spirits (yet never teach them how to show this ability to scientist to win the Nobel prize). The moment that eventually I learn the truth about reality which is now I adopt metaphysical/ontological naturalism/physicalism/atheism, mathematical nominalism, scientific realism and anarchism.

It all started on the internet when like I said there is no interest in philosophy in my area all I have was the internet but I was an idiot when it comes to technology so I have to rely the most basic understanding to use it when I discover Wikipedia and YouTube which change me although I use it first to find a case for theism for years until I discover the Skeptic YouTube Community, Atheist YouTube Community, leftist YouTubers and BreadTube were I reevaluate my views at this point I was a firm believer of agnosticism and having the most barebones/minimum understanding of philosophy, theology, math and science that these communities and the many debates I found among experts of all side that I started to question my own views until I found Friedrich Nietzsche it change everything this man is the reason I became who I am when reading (or using audiobooks) The Gay Science, Thus Spoke Zarathustra and The Anti-Christ were I have adopted his views and soon after Existential Nihilism became my first influence (although my first exposure was much earlier by the works of H.P. Lovecraft and his Cosmic Nihilism).

This is were the philosophy of Existential Nihilism which combine with Cosmic Nihilism, Anti-Natalism, Absurdism and Terror Management Theory change me. This is were I accepted that life is meaningless (on a cosmic scale) and learning Astronomy were my love for science started but also extend my Nihilist view, reading Lovecraft works and his constant theme of humanity meaningless of the universe was correct when I learn the size of the observable universe, natural disaster, 5 mass extinction, humanities very brief existent on earth, wars, serial killers and the ultimate fate of the universe (thanks astronomy) I must face the absurdity of existence and religion was created when they misunderstood nature and having awareness about death for the first time (which has been proven by observing other apes).

Nietzsche unrivaled intellect and prophetic warnings about European society that the man not only impacted me but I dare to say that he was the last great philosopher were his philosophy and words have become part of civilization itself which to a lesser extent he is the father of Post-Modernism and Post-Structuralism were it was my first influence when it comes to politics were many

philosophers in this tradition were either influence by Nietzsche himself or either there philosophies reflect or extent Nietzsche's philosophy like Michel Foucault were his understanding on power influence me and his Philosophy of History/Historiography change my views on history in fact my first book on Philosophy of History/Historiography was The Archeology of Knowledge.

Not only Foucault introduce me to anarchism (in his case Marxist Anarchist) but Jean Baudrillard was my introduction to Marxism (in his case Post-Marxism) were it forever change my views on society when reading Simulacra and Simulation was like receiving the secrets of the universe when my thoughts on language like the stereotypical post-modern view that words have no meaning we made them to give meaning with agreement among definitions. Were Jean's approach to symbols and critique of Late Capitalism was my first step to socialism although he was not the person that make me a socialist but Kyle Kolinski and shortly after Leon Trotsky.

Another influence was when I read my first atheist literature and that was Why I Am Not A Christian by Bertrand Russell, this is were my journey to atheism begins and my development of my life philosophy begins were I was talking to myself what is the best philosophy? How can I find truth? What is truth? I already answer in my Failures from Religion so I don't repeat here but in short I believe a philosophy with the least amount of assumptions, simples/minimum requirements (this includes the Correspondence Theory of Truth which is the simplest theory of truth) with the highest predictive value and explanatory power. I was influence by Russell specifically in his later years (1930-1970) were he became neutral monist were he is a empiricist with some rationalist/idealist elements like a priori knowledge; One of the things that Russell influence me was his correspondence theory of truth when a proposition is false, it is so because of a fact, holding that experience is the ultimate basis of knowledge, language of experience, as an investigation into an empirical phenomenon, studying language (basically everything) scientifically and his approach to science that his approach was a softer approach to scientific realism (Structuralism) were it influence Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shift. The biggest influence on me was my first exposure of the dangers of religion holding a similar view to Lucretius that religion is base on fear.

Thanks to Russell that my views on religion has change were I was looking on the internet to find other people who share similar view were in 2017 I discover the New Atheist when I found the God Delusion by Richard Dawkins while I did not understand his definition of atheism and agnosticism which never make sense to me but despite his philosophical thinking was sloppy with the exception of his refutation of the intelligent design/watchmaker argument (The Ultimate Boeing 747 and Irreducible Complexity) this is were I was introduce about evolution by natural selection and the scientific method were I found Sam Harris (which I consider the most boring to read), Christopher Hitchens (the most entertaining) and my personal favorite Daniel Dennett (I was already studying the history of religion but in the stone age) and Victor Stenger (were I was introduce about particle physics) I have to thank them to introduce me to the scientific method and philosophy of science.

Another influence I have was the Pre-Socratic philosophy about the position of Material monism were the entire universe is composed of a single element like Thales is water, Anaximander is Apeiron, Anaximenes is air and Heraclitus is change. Where I was studying the history of

philosophy and science (astronomy to be more specific) I learn these early thinkers reject the gods as a explanation while we know little about these individuals (because every philosopher before Plato there writings are either lost or only small fragments remain) these figures influence me about how I view religion when many people today say gods is the answer yet people as far back as 2600 years ago people reject gods and eventually create the theory of the atom and early theist philosophers use the first teleological argument as a refutation of the atom but these unbelievers won this war.

Another influence was David Hume were my respect to skepticism attributes to Hume despite my rejection of his extreme skepticism but he lay the groundwork of my views of famous arguments of god and his uniformity of nature which also influence my views of how to universe works and most obviously his case against miracles which I see the argument that forever destroyed all miracle/personal experience arguments which overtime neuroscience, psychology, chemistry and sociology have proven Hume's critique of miracles.

Despite these individuals, movements and schools of thought that influence me but there are 2 philosophies that impact me the most beside Existential Nihilism; These two philosophies are American Pragmatism and Australian Realism (including New Zealand philosophy of science)

The Pragmatist is my foundation (combining pragmatism with corresponded theory of truth) like Peirce view of the scientific method are the best way to settle differences of opinions with the scientific method with his fallibilism can eliminate beliefs with no practical worth and the method will results in views that are objected and impersonal. My pragmatists heritage can attribute to Wittgenstein which in my view that Wittgenstein final years (On Certainty) I consider this part of his life as a Wittgensteinian pragmatism were his criticism of extreme skepticism, his attention to ordinary language will solve philosophical problems and his approach to metaphysics that philosophers confusing language give false metaphysical statement and creating many pseudo problems which these "problems" are made up creating more confusion and adopting Pierce fallibilism. Were using language responding sensory experience (empiricism) to corresponded truth statement were language are highly formalized were axioms are determined by definition. This is why the majority of philosophical schools of thought are meaningless because when it put in practice it does not work or self-serving thus we must use language similar to Wittgenstein but with a pragmatist approach when language guides our beliefs and beliefs guide actions, actions have consequence and consequence are objective and we use language to describe objective reality and label the facts that corresponded reality and these decisions will manifest themselves in forms of controlled and predictable experiences and reject philosophies that use language that rejects the pragmatist approach will always fail no matter how many arguments, premises and logical deduction you make you have to use that information into committed actions thus no amount of sophisticated argumentation will save you from a person who is going to shoot you in the head. Wilfrid Sellars another pragmatist that influence me when reading Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind using scientific model of peoples behavior and language which empiricism like science is self-correcting.

Another major influence is Australasian philosophy to be more specific Australian realism and New Zealand philosophy of science when my physicalist view have been completed like Musgrave

case for scientific realism were he show using the Inference to the Best Explanation but as a deductive inference shows that instrumentalism, surrealism and constructive empiricism fail as explanations of why theories can anticipate novel facts. Adopting John Anderson's metaphysics that physics as the best guide and there is nothing outside space and time which Platonist ideas of mathematical entities does not exist in time only things exist either earlier or later than us at some particular location in this world we live.

These philosophies are the most powerful to find like Argument to the Best Explanation when a hypothesis must conform to expectations set by background knowledge which rely on the fewest assumptions and include fewer new suppositions, it must make evidence which observation statements implies more probable than any other, it must not contradict any evidence/contradict much less than any competing theory and must explain more of the evidence than any other hypothesis.

This is why the supernatural (god, afterlife, karma and etc..) is impossible by abductive reasoning were natural patterns of matter, energy and space time according to the laws of physics is absolute, this is why any philosophy that rejects science and relies by thinking really hard (armchair/inductive/ a priori) without evidence/observation and reject all logical and mathematical proofs requires have to be empirically observation and testing in the laboratory.

Yet on the internet I see people defending Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Polytheism and others yet they will agree with the atheist when it comes to critique other religions/theism that is not there own or use ridiculous excuses to defend certain doctrines that wasn't part of the theology of the founders of there religion (trinity in Christianity which was started not by Jesus or Paul but instead Clement I in the year 96) or theist using quantum mechanics to justify there god, soul, spirits, idealism and dualism yet all evidence point to naturalism instead of me rambling I give you why quantum mechanics does not prove theism in a 2015 article in Sandford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Sometimes it is suggested that the indeterminism of modern quantum mechanics creates room for sui generis non-physical causes to influence the physical world. However, even if quantum mechanics implies that some physical effects are themselves undetermined, it provides no reason to doubt a quantum version of the causal closure thesis, to the effect that the chances of those effects are fully fixed by prior physical circumstances. And this alone is enough to rule out sui generis non-physical causes. For such sui generis causes, if they are to be genuinely efficacious, must presumably make an independent difference to the chances of physical effects, and this in itself would be inconsistent with the quantum causal closure claim that such chances are already fixed by prior physical circumstances. Once more, it seems that anything that makes a difference to the physical realm must itself be physical).

Combine all these influence were my views changes like my rejection of external world skepticism (I was influence by Wittgenstein's here's one hand argument in On Certainty), my rejection of telos/teleology/theist approach of being (which Darwin's theory of natural selection influence me and the existence of virtual particles disprove the teleological idea that everything has a cause), rejecting nothingness (in quantum mechanics were is impossible to reduce any substance to absolute zero in temperature thus emptiness will always radiate a heat glow and in quantum field theory shows that nothingness is impossible because the material energy in the universe are eternal

even in a vacuum state particles are still there call virtual particles, Casimir effect/vacuum energy that QFT disprove philosophical nothing and QFT is the most successful theory in science), reality (all the evidence points to physicalism were reality is that everything is physical/supervenes on the physical), math (all mathematicians are nominalist because math like English are formalize language to communicate and will change overtime), a priori knowledge (knowledge always derives from experience), consciousness (I reject cartesian demon like arguments which I explain why in the Failures of Religion, all the evidence points to a physicalist/Darwinian approach to consciences thus I reject the hard problem of consciousness) and metaphilosophy (I subscribe that philosophy should be consistent to science like the pragmatist scientific realism of Sellars).

In summary I live in a place were people are anti-philosophy, anti-metaphysics, pro-common sense have influence my thinking at a very young age when searching for god I became atheist in the end who subscribe on metaphysical naturalism/physicals starting by discovery the Atheist, Skeptic, Leftist and BreadTube YouTube community were I discover atheism then reading the works of Bertrand Russell hearing arguments for atheism for the first time which later discover the New Atheist (although I was late to the party) which I was introduce to evolution and the scientific method then learning Pre-Socratic philosophy were naturalism became reasonable then David Hume and his critique of miracles and induction were my rejection of all a priori arguments attributes to him, Post-Modern/structuralist influence my leftists views, then Existential Nihilism that permanently change my life philosophy and lastly the combination of American Pragmatist and Australasian realism are my main foundation that even virtually all philosophers, scientist and mathematicians in the world have adopted to their methods even if they relies it or not (even they rejects it but they use it anyway).

To clarify atheism is not a worldview is just one position to one question (does a god exist) it has nothing to do to any other question that many atheist and skeptics tackle although many share a common worldview of ontological naturalism but many atheist historically hold positions that many atheist in the atheist YouTube community, Skeptic YouTube community, Reddit Atheism and New Atheism will consider forbidden like believing in a supernatural (is not a contradiction to be atheist and believe everything else that is usually associate with religious belief) are atheist who hold non-naturalist views like Betrend Russel (Neutral Monism), J. M. E. McTaggart (afterlife), various Cynics/Stoics atheist philosophers (who belief in a naturalistic god who are just like us but because of evolution or artificial means) Arthur Schopenhauer (Idealism), Martin Heidegger (Idealism), Pierre Hadot (atheist mysticism) and Georges Bataille (occultism, mysticism and esotericism) but I will continued the trend of atheism = naturalism.

Introduction

For many years people are expressing doubt of the existence of God, religion and the supernatural in general that thanks to literature we found a rich history of doubt, in this anthology of doubt I will show you influential atheist and there philosophical/theological thoughts and conclusion of why there is no God and their views on religion from the diversity of thinkers from different backgrounds that the ancestor of atheism goes back to Aruni, Confucius, Laozi, Parshvanatha, Makkhali Gosala, Siddhartha Gautama, Thales of Miletus, Heraclitus and Anaxagoras. They were the first philosophers, the first scientist and the first mathematicians that introduce naturalistic

explanation instead of god being the answer, introduce the theory of the atom which became the backbone of physics and chemistry, introduce ontology and the Buddha introduce the problem of evil and other atheist, pragmatist and humanist arguments before Epicurus (Devadaha Sutta, Nikaya literature, Tevijja Sutta, Digha Nikaya, Vekhanassa Sutta, Cula-Sakuladayi Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya, Brahmajala Sutta, Bhuridatta Jataka, Mahabodhi Jataka, Tittha Sutta, Kevaddha Sutta and Anguttara Nikaya) where the Buddha declare the belief in god and life after death is empty, nonsense, laughable, un healthy and that there is no creator (false theory). Without them our history may have be very different but without there doubts about religion our understating of the universe may have not progress like we do today and now we know the truth about the universe and because of this the majority of scientist, philosophers and mathematicians are atheist (~60%) and if we include agnostics and other unbelievers under the category of non-theist then theist are almost non-existence among intellectuals while outside of the scientific, mathematical and philosophical community that the common people are theist. But because atheist were persecuted for years that ancient atheist and there texts are lost and the few that survive are fragments that is reduce to quotes and the very few texts that survive has nothing to do with atheism/god and the oldest books that survive that is about a philosophical/theological case for atheism is from Jean Meslier and Matthias Knutzen; anything before them are either lost or has nothing to do with atheism (either books is about there life philosophy and when mention there view of god is only a half a page long or either to prevent persecution use a case for pantheism or epicurean deism; Rather or not you think epicureans and pantheist are atheist is up to you but for the sake of this book I assume is not). But since the second century our progress in mathematics, science and philosophy that all the evidence points to metaphysical naturalism/physicalism (atheism) thus when the first great debate in history (Parmenides vs Heraclitus) about reality and god (void/proto-theory of atoms/empiricism/atheism vs god/intelligent cosmic mind/rationalism/theism) that atheist (Heraclitus) won when we discover cosmic inflation (void) and atoms (neutrinos are the smallest thing in the universe).

It is interesting when the first theist created religion, the belief of miracles, after-life and gods as explanation for everything but the first scientist, mathematician and philosophers are atheist like Thales of Miletus was to first to reject gods as an explanation and use proto-naturalism/materialism/physicalism as the answer then creating the first school(Ionian/Milesian school), his first student Anaximander follows his naturalist and atheist philosophy and his scientific work became the father of cosmology, he was the first to speculate of alien life and the first to propose evolution (but is very different to Darwin's theory) which will later influence other atheist like Heraclitus, Democritus, Euhemerus (the father of Roman poetry), Thucydides and Epicureans (deist or crypto-atheist) while in China the first philosophers are Laozi and Confucius were use a naturalist view of the world, expressing humanist ethics and in some cases agnostic view of the afterlife. In India the Rig Veda express early atheist and agnostic views but the first philosopher in India is Aruni were like Democritus made the theory of the atom which influence the many early Indian philosophical schools (Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, and Mīmāṃsā) were these schools are atheist that promotes naturalism, empiricism and the theory of the atom (but they never made a philosophical books for atheism but made books about there entire schools which either topic of god is silent or when mention is just one sentence long or just one argument). Lastly the unorthodox Hindu schools are atheist also influence by Aruni (Jainism, Buddhism, Ajivika,

Ajñana, and Cārvāka) were they also promotes the theory of the atom but also reject the Veda focus theology of the orthodox schools. While the origins of atheism is a very unique thing something as interesting as the origins of religion but despite these first unbelievers laying the foundation of science, math, philosophy, ethics, cosmology, biology, physics, astronomy and metaphysics while Pythagoras (influential figure in math), Xenophanes (rejected the Homer's gods) and Parmenides (introduce the great debate) lay the foundation of theology (especially the theology of Christianity and Islam), monotheism (Xenophanes) and the idea that nothing comes from nothing (creation ex nihilo) which these theist philosophers will later influence Plato, Aristotle, Christianity and Islam that by consequence a history of religious violence, superstition, totalitarianism (Plato's philosopher king), realist approach to numbers (Plato's theory of forms in his work Philebus), creationist/god being all good (Plato's Demiurge in Timaeus) justification of theocracy were atheism is a crime or sent them to education camp to remove there skepticism (Laws Plato's last work), false beliefs that still persist in todays society and todays theologians (like the creation ex nihilo. The A-theory of time, miracles and the concept of the non-physical minds). But over time naturalism/physicalism became the victor (thus atheism) when we discover cosmic inflation, neutrinos, B-theory of time, quantum mechanics, abiogenesis, evolution and a theory to religion/theism itself. This is why the majority of philosophers/scientist are metaphysical/ontological/metaphilosophical naturalism that according to the Oxford Companion to Philosophy most philosophers adopt either reductive physicalism or non-reductive physicalism because all the evidence point there which later create the field of evolutionary psychology and neuroscience (I recommend The Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are). Also the idea of an all-powerful/knowing/good god that Christians and Muslims is taken from Plato's Demiurge/The Good but the Buddha and Epicurus introduce the problem of evil that this type of god is impossible. Despite the first Greek, Chinese and Indian philosophers were atheist/agnostic/skeptics that promotes intellectual inquiry but the first Jewish philosopher (Philo of Alexandria) believe that priest are superior to philosopher/scientist, the first Muslim philosopher (Al-Kindi) believe prophecy is superior to Hellenistic understanding, the first Christian philosopher (Ignatius of Antioch) promotes the violent doctrine of martyrdom and obey Bishops like they were Christ himself (blind obedience), Averroes argued all essential truths is in the Quran and we should abandoned philosophy and Aquinas having sloppy philosophy like having conclusions that are fixed in advance he has no interest in philosophical inquiry because he thinks he already knows the truth (Roman Catholic faith).

Before we start the anthology this is a case for a specific kind of atheism:

Meta-metaphysics/Meta-ontology – Wittgensteinian Pragmatism

Metaphysics/Ontology/Meta-Ethics/Metaphilosophy (philosophy of philosophy) – Naturalism

Mind – Physicalism (Reductive Physicalism/Functionalism/Computational theory of mind)

Normative ethics – Consequentialism

Free Will – Compatibilism

Metamathematics/Philosophy of mathematics – Nominalism

Knowledge – Empiricism (experience is absolute), A Postpriori (rejecting all a priori arguments), Abductive reasoning (rejecting inductive reasoning)

Truth – Correspondence theory of truth

Metascience/Philosophy of science – Scientific Realism and Scientism

Rig Veda, Nasadiya Sukta (1,700 BC – 1,100 BC) (Agnosticism)

Then even nothingness was not, nor existence, There was no air then, nor the heavens beyond it. What covered it? Where was it? In whose keeping? Was there then cosmic water, in depths unfathomed? Then there was neither death nor immortality nor was there then the torch of night and day. The One breathed windlessly and self-sustaining. There was that One then, and there was no other. At first there was only darkness wrapped in darkness. All this was only unillumined cosmic water. That One which came to be, enclosed in nothing, arose at last, born of the power of heat. In the beginning desire descended on it - that was the primal seed, born of the mind. The sages who have searched their hearts with wisdom know that which is, is kin to that which is not. And they have stretched their cord across the void, and know what was above, and what below. Seminal powers made fertile mighty forces. Below was strength, and over it was impulse. But, after all, who knows, and who can say Whence it all came, and how creation happened? the gods themselves are later than creation, so who knows truly whence it has arisen? Whence all creation had its origin, the creator, whether he fashioned it or whether he did not, the creator, who surveys it all from highest heaven, he knows — or maybe even he does not know.

The Rig Veda/Mandala 10/Hymn 130 (the first or at least the oldest atheist or atheistic literature ever)

THE sacrifice drawn out with threads on every side, stretched by a hundred sacred ministers and one,-This do these Fathers weave who hitherward are come: they sit beside the warp and cry, Weave forth, weave back. The Man extends it and the Man unbinds it: even to this vault of heaven hath he outspun, it. These pegs are fastened to the seat of worship: they made the Sama-hymns their weaving shuttles. What were the rule, the order and the model? What were the wooden fender and the butter? What were the hymn, the chant, the recitation, when to the God all Deities paid worship? Closely was Gayatri conjoined with Agni, and closely Savitar combined with Usnih. Brilliant with Ukthas, Soma joined Anustup: Brhaspati's voice by Brhati was aided. Viraj adhered to Varuna and Mitra: here Tristup day by day was Indra's portion. Jagati entered all the Gods together: so by this knowledge men were raised to Rsis. So by this knowledge men were raised to Rsis, when ancient sacrifice sprang up, our Fathers. With the mind's eye I think that I behold them who first performed this sacrificial worship. They who were versed in ritual and metre, in hymns and rules, were the Seven Godlike Rsis. Viewing the path of those of old, the sages have taken up the reins like chariot-drivers.

Chandogya Upanishad - The Udgitha of the Dogs (8th to 6th century BC) (satire)

Now follows the Udgitha of the dogs: One day, Vaka the son of Dalbhya, or as he was also called, Glava son of Mitra, went forth to study the Vedas. A white dog appeared before him. Other dogs, gathering around, said to him (i.e. the white dog): "Revered Sir, please sing for us, so we may obtain food; we are hungry." He (the white dog) said to them: "Come to me here tomorrow morning." Vaka the son of Dalbhya, or as he was also called, Glava son of Mitra, kept watch. Just as the priests move along, holding to one another, when they are about to sing praises with the Vahishpavamana hymn, so did the dogs move along. Then they sat down and uttered the syllable Him. Om. Let us eat! Om. Let us drink! Om. Let the sun, who is the luminous deity (deva), the giver of rain (Varuna), the lord of creatures (Prajapati), bring food here! Now a prayer to the sun: O lord of food, bring food here, bring it here. Om.

Mundaka Upanishad (early example of pantheism)

The sky is his head, his eyes the sun and the moon, the quarters his ears, his speech the Vedas disclosed, the wind his breath, his heart the universe, from his feet came the earth, he is indeed the inner Self of all things. From him comes fire, the sun being the fuel, from the soma comes the rain, from the earth the herbs, the male pours the seed into the female, thus many beings are begotten from the Purusha. From him come the Rig verses, the Saman chants, the Yajus formulae, the Diksha rites, all sacrifices, all ceremonies and all gifts, the year too, the sacrificers, the worlds, where the moon shines brightly, as does sun. From him, too, gods are manifold produced, the celestials, the men, the cattle, the birds, the breathing, the rice, the corn, the meditation, the Shraddha (faith), the Satya (truth), the Brahmacharya, and the Vidhi (law).

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad by Yajnavalkya (9th to 6th century BC) (early atheistic views)

But when he [Self] fancies that he is, as it were, a god, or that he is, as it were, a king, or "I am this altogether," that is his highest world, This indeed is his (true) form, free from desires, free from evil, free from fear. Now as a man, when embraced by a beloved wife, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within, thus this person, when embraced by the Prajna (conscious, aware) Self, knows nothing that is without, nothing that is within. This indeed is his (true) form, in which his wishes are fulfilled, in which the Self only is his wish, in which no other wish is left, he is free from any sorrow. Then a father is not a father, a mother not a mother, the worlds not worlds, the gods not gods, the Vedas not Vedas. Then a thief is not a thief, a murderer not a murderer, a Sramana not a Sramana, a Tâpasa not a Tâpasa. He is not affected by good, not affected by evil, for he has then overcome all sorrows, all sufferings. (...) Thus did Yâgñavalkya teach him. This is his highest Goal, this is his highest Success, this is his highest World, this is his highest Bliss.

Samkhya-karika (200 CE and the school Smakhya originated ~1,000 BC to 600 BC) (commentary)

You say that God is the cause. This is not correct. Why so? Since He is without genetic constituents (Guna). God does not possess the three genetic constituents, whereas the world does possess the

three genetic constituents. The cause and the effect would not resemble each other; therefore God is not the cause

Nandlal Sinha discovering the Samkhya argument against an eternal self-cause God

If the existence of karma is assumed, the proposition of God as a moral governor of the universe is unnecessary. For, if God enforces the consequences of actions then he can do so without karma. If however, he is assumed to be within the law of karma, then karma itself would be the giver of consequences and there would be no need of a God. Even if karma is denied, God still cannot be the enforcer of consequences. Because the motives of an enforcer God would be either egoistic or altruistic. Now, God's motives cannot be assumed to be altruistic because an altruistic God would not create a world so full of suffering. If his motives are assumed to be egoistic, then God must be thought to have desire, as agency or authority cannot be established in the absence of desire. However, assuming that God has desire would contradict God's eternal freedom which necessitates no compulsion in actions. Moreover, desire, according to Samkhya, is an attribute of prakṛti and cannot be thought to grow in God. The testimony of the Vedas, according to Samkhya, also confirms this notion. Despite arguments to the contrary, if God is still assumed to contain unfulfilled desires, this would cause him to suffer pain and other similar human experiences. Such a worldly God would be no better than Samkhya's notion of higher self. Furthermore, there is no proof of the existence of God. He is not the object of perception, there exists no general proposition that can prove him by inference and the testimony of the Vedas speak of prakṛti as the origin of the world, not God.

Brahma sutras (400-450 CE)

If it be said that a contradiction will result in regard to Word (Vedas), we say that it is not so because the origination of everything is from perception and inference.

Silanka accounts of Ajñana critique of omniscience

There is no one with an outstanding intellect whose statements may be regarded as authoritative; even if such a person existed, he cannot be discovered by one with a limited vision according to the maxim that "one who is not omniscient does not know everything" for it is said "how can one desiring to know that a certain person is omniscient at a certain time do so if he is devoid of that person's intellect, his knowledge and his consciousness"; owing to the absence of the knowledge of the means, it cannot properly be accomplished; it cannot be accomplished because of the mutual dependence (of the two); for it is said "without a super-knowledge (visistaparijñana) the knowledge of the means is not attained and as a result there is no attainment of the super-knowledge of the object".

Nyaya Sutra (6th century BC to 2nd century CE)

Proposition sutra: Ishvara is the cause, since we see sometimes human action lacks fruits (results). Prima facie objection sutra: This is not so since, as a matter of fact, no fruit is accomplished without human action. Conclusion sutra: Not so, since it is influenced by him

Cārvāka (fragment)

The fire is hot, the water cold, refreshing cool the breeze of morn; By whom came this variety ? from their own nature was it born There is no other world other than this; There is no heaven and no hell; The realm of Shiva and like regions, are fabricated by stupid imposters

Jainism - Gopani (1989)

These Gods tainted with attachment and passion; having women and weapons by their side, favour some and disfavour some; such Gods should not be worshipped by those who desire emancipation"

Yogaśāstra (12th Century)

This universe is not created nor sustained by anyone; It is self sustaining, without any base or support.

Jinasena in Mahāpurāna (9th Century)

Some foolish men declare that creator made the world. The doctrine that the world was created is ill advised and should be rejected. If God created the world, where was he before the creation? If you say he was transcendent then and needed no support, where is he now? How could God have made this world without any raw material? If you say that he made this first, and then the world, you are faced with an endless regression. If you declare that this raw material arose naturally you fall into another fallacy, For the whole universe might thus have been its own creator, and have arisen quite naturally. If God created the world by an act of his own will, without any raw material, then it is just his will and nothing else — and who will believe this silly nonsense? If he is ever perfect and complete, how could the will to create have arisen in him? If, on the other hand, he is not perfect, he could no more create the universe than a potter could. If he is form-less, action-less and all-embracing, how could he have created the world? Such a soul, devoid of all modality, would have no desire to create anything. If he is perfect, he does not strive for the three aims of man, so what advantage would he gain by creating the universe? If you say that he created to no purpose because it was his nature to do so, then God is pointless. If he created in some kind of sport, it was the sport of a foolish child, leading to trouble. If he created because of the karma of embodied beings [acquired in a previous creation] He is not the Almighty Lord, but subordinate to something else If out of love for living beings and need of them he made the world, why did he not make creation wholly blissful free from misfortune? If he were transcendent he would not create, for he would be free: Nor if involved in transmigration, for then he would not be almighty. Thus the doctrine that the world was created by God makes no sense at all, And God commits great sin in slaying the children whom he himself created. If you say that he slays only to destroy evil beings, why did he create such beings in the first place? Good men should combat the believer in divine creation, maddened by an evil doctrine. Know that the world is uncreated, as time itself

is, without beginning or end, and is based on the principles, life and rest. Uncreated and indestructible, it endures under the compulsion of its own nature.

The Buddha Teaches Deities (Summaries)

Many people worship Maha Brahma as the supreme and eternal creator God, but for the Buddha he is merely a powerful deity still caught within the cycle of repeated existence. In point of fact, "Maha Brahma" is a role or office filled by different individuals at different periods." "His proof included the fact that "many thousands of deities have gone for refuge for life to the recluse Gotama" (MN 95.9). Devas, like humans, develop faith in the Buddha by practicing his teachings." "A second deva concerned with liberation spoke a verse which is partly praise of the Buddha and partly a request for teaching. Using various similes from the animal world, this god showed his admiration and reverence for the Exalted One.", "A discourse called Sakka's Questions (DN 21) took place after he had been a serious disciple of the Buddha for some time. The sutta records a long audience he had with the Blessed One which culminated in his attainment of stream-entry. Their conversation is an excellent example of the Buddha as "teacher of devas," and shows all beings how to work for Nibbana.

Kevaddha Sutta (the Buddha teaches to reject miracles as fake magic and express pragmatism, empiricism and atheism instead)

When this was said, the Great Brahma said to the monk, 'I, monk, am Brahma, the Great Brahma, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be... That is why I did not say in their presence that I, too, don't know where the four great elements... cease without remainder. So you have acted wrongly, acted incorrectly, in bypassing the Blessed One in search of an answer to this question elsewhere. Go right back to the Blessed One and, on arrival, ask him this question. However he answers it, you should take it to heart.

Gautama Buddha (563-400 BC)

He who haves eyes can see the sickness sight, Why does not God sent his creatures right?

Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra (350-400 CE)

Personal identity, continuum, groups, causal conditions, atoms, primordial matter, and God the creator are regarded as mere ideas.

Vasubandhu (4th to 5th century)

He who accepts that there is but one cause of the universe must deny the obvious human effort in other matters. And he who fancies God as a creator along with [other] causal factors would merely be proclaiming his devotion, for we do not observe the operation of anything other than [the other] causal factors when something arises from them.

Aristotle (384-322 BC) refutation of Plato’s Demiurge/The Good and Theory of Forms (Metaphysics) - Deism

"Let us return to the subject of our inquiry, which is substance. As the substratum and the essence and the compound of these are called substance, so also is the universal. About two of these we have spoken; both about the essence and about the substratum, of which we have said that it underlies in two senses, either being a 'this'-which is the way in which an animal underlies its attributes-or as the matter underlies the complete reality. The universal also is thought by some to be in the fullest sense a cause, and a principle; therefore let us attack the discussion of this point also. For it seems impossible that any universal term should be the name of a substance. For firstly the substance of each thing is that which is peculiar to it, which does not belong to anything else; but the universal is common, since that is called universal which is such as to belong to more than one thing. Of which individual then will this be the substance? Either of all or of none; but it cannot be the substance of all. And if it is to be the substance of one, this one will be the others also; for things whose substance is one and whose essence is one are themselves also one.

"Further, substance means that which is not predicable of a subject, but the universal is predicable of some subject always.

"But perhaps the universal, while it cannot be substance in the way in which the essence is so, can be present in this; e.g. 'animal' can be present in 'man' and 'horse'. Then clearly it is a formula of the essence. And it makes no difference even if it is not a formula of everything that is in the substance; for none the less the universal will be the substance of something, as 'man' is the substance of the individual man in whom it is present, so that the same result will follow once more; for the universal, e.g. 'animal', will be the substance of that in which it is present as something peculiar to it. And further it is impossible and absurd that the 'this', i.e. the substance, if it consists of parts, should not consist of substances nor of what is a 'this', but of quality; for that which is not substance, i.e. the quality, will then be prior to substance and to the 'this'. Which is impossible; for neither in formula nor in time nor in coming to be can the modifications be prior to the substance; for then they will also be separable from it. Further, Socrates will contain a substance present in a substance, so that this will be the substance of two things. And in general it follows, if man and such things are substance, that none of the elements in their formulae is the substance of anything, nor does it exist apart from the species or in anything else; I mean, for instance, that no 'animal' exists apart from the particular kinds of animal, nor does any other of the elements present in formulae exist apart.

"If, then, we view the matter from these standpoints, it is plain that no universal attribute is a substance, and this is plain also from the fact that no common predicate indicates a 'this', but rather a 'such'. If not, many difficulties follow and especially the 'third man'.

"The conclusion is evident also from the following consideration. A substance cannot consist of substances present in it in complete reality; for things that are thus in complete reality two are never in complete reality one, though if they are potentially two, they can be one (e.g. the double line consists of two halves-potentially; for the complete realization of the halves divides them from one another); therefore if the substance is one, it will not consist of substances present in it and

present in this way, which Democritus describes rightly; he says one thing cannot be made out of two nor two out of one; for he identifies substances with his indivisible magnitudes. It is clear therefore that the same will hold good of number, if number is a synthesis of units, as is said by some; for two is either not one, or there is no unit present in it in complete reality. But our result involves a difficulty. If no substance can consist of universals because a universal indicates a 'such', not a 'this', and if no substance can be composed of substances existing in complete reality, every substance would be incomposite, so that there would not even be a formula of any substance. But it is thought by all and was stated long ago that it is either only, or primarily, substance that can defined; yet now it seems that not even substance can. There cannot, then, be a definition of anything; or in a sense there can be, and in a sense there cannot. And what we are saying will be plainer from what follows.

"It is clear also from these very facts what consequence confronts those who say the Ideas are substances capable of separate existence, and at the same time make the Form consist of the genus and the differentiae. For if the Forms exist and 'animal' is present in 'man' and 'horse', it is either one and the same in number, or different. (In formula it is clearly one; for he who states the formula will go through the formula in either case.) If then there is a 'man-in-himself' who is a 'this' and exists apart, the parts also of which he consists, e.g. 'animal' and 'two-footed', must indicate 'thises', and be capable of separate existence, and substances; therefore 'animal', as well as 'man', must be of this sort.

"Now (1) if the 'animal' in 'the horse' and in 'man' is one and the same, as you are with yourself, (a) how will the one in things that exist apart be one, and how will this 'animal' escape being divided even from itself?

"Further, (b) if it is to share in 'two-footed' and 'many-footed', an impossible conclusion follows; for contrary attributes will belong at the same time to it although it is one and a 'this'. If it is not to share in them, what is the relation implied when one says the animal is two-footed or possessed of feet? But perhaps the two things are 'put together' and are 'in contact', or are 'mixed'. Yet all these expressions are absurd.

"But (2) suppose the Form to be different in each species. Then there will be practically an infinite number of things whose substance is animal'; for it is not by accident that 'man' has 'animal' for one of its elements. Further, many things will be 'animal-itself'. For (i) the 'animal' in each species will be the substance of the species; for it is after nothing else that the species is called; if it were, that other would be an element in 'man', i.e. would be the genus of man. And further, (ii) all the elements of which 'man' is composed will be Ideas. None of them, then, will be the Idea of one thing and the substance of another; this is impossible. The 'animal', then, present in each species of animals will be animal-itself. Further, from what is this 'animal' in each species derived, and how will it be derived from animal-itself? Or how can this 'animal', whose essence is simply animality, exist apart from animal-itself?

"Further, (3)in the case of sensible things both these consequences and others still more absurd follow. If, then, these consequences are impossible, clearly there are not Forms of sensible things in the sense in which some maintain their existence.

"Since substance is of two kinds, the concrete thing and the formula (I mean that one kind of substance is the formula taken with the matter, while another kind is the formula in its generality), substances in the former sense are capable of destruction (for they are capable also of generation), but there is no destruction of the formula in the sense that it is ever in course of being destroyed (for there is no generation of it either; the being of house is not generated, but only the being of this house), but without generation and destruction formulae are and are not; for it has been shown that no one begets nor makes these. For this reason, also, there is neither definition of nor demonstration about sensible individual substances, because they have matter whose nature is such that they are capable both of being and of not being; for which reason all the individual instances of them are destructible. If then demonstration is of necessary truths and definition is a scientific process, and if, just as knowledge cannot be sometimes knowledge and sometimes ignorance, but the state which varies thus is opinion, so too demonstration and definition cannot vary thus, but it is opinion that deals with that which can be otherwise than as it is, clearly there can neither be definition of nor demonstration about sensible individuals. For perishing things are obscure to those who have the relevant knowledge, when they have passed from our perception; and though the formulae remain in the soul unchanged, there will no longer be either definition or demonstration. And so when one of the definition-mongers defines any individual, he must recognize that his definition may always be overthrown; for it is not possible to define such things.

"Nor is it possible to define any Idea. For the Idea is, as its supporters say, an individual, and can exist apart; and the formula must consist of words; and he who defines must not invent a word (for it would be unknown), but the established words are common to all the members of a class; these then must apply to something besides the thing defined; e.g. if one were defining you, he would say 'an animal which is lean' or 'pale', or something else which will apply also to some one other than you. If any one were to say that perhaps all the attributes taken apart may belong to many subjects, but together they belong only to this one, we must reply first that they belong also to both the elements; e.g. 'two-footed animal' belongs to animal and to the two-footed. (And in the case of eternal entities this is even necessary, since the elements are prior to and parts of the compound; nay more, they can also exist apart, if 'man' can exist apart. For either neither or both can. If, then, neither can, the genus will not exist apart from the various species; but if it does, the differentia will also.) Secondly, we must reply that 'animal' and 'two-footed' are prior in being to 'two-footed animal'; and things which are prior to others are not destroyed when the others are.

"Again, if the Ideas consist of Ideas (as they must, since elements are simpler than the compound), it will be further necessary that the elements also of which the Idea consists, e.g. 'animal' and 'two-footed', should be predicated of many subjects. If not, how will they come to be known? For there will then be an Idea which cannot be predicated of more subjects than one. But this is not thought possible-every Idea is thought to be capable of being shared.

"As has been said, then, the impossibility of defining individuals escapes notice in the case of eternal things, especially those which are unique, like the sun or the moon. For people err not only by adding attributes whose removal the sun would survive, e.g. 'going round the earth' or 'night-hidden' (for from their view it follows that if it stands still or is visible, it will no longer be the sun; but it is strange if this is so; for 'the sun' means a certain substance); but also by the mention of

attributes which can belong to another subject; e.g. if another thing with the stated attributes comes into existence, clearly it will be a sun; the formula therefore is general. But the sun was supposed to be an individual, like Cleon or Socrates. After all, why does not one of the supporters of the Ideas produce a definition of an Idea? It would become clear, if they tried, that what has now been said is true.

Epicurus (341–270 BC) (various quotes)

It is folly for a man to pray to the gods for that which he has the power to obtain by himself. If God listened to the prayers of men, all men would quickly have perished: for they are forever praying for evil against one another. Death does not concern us, because as long as we exist, death is not here. And when it does come, we no longer exist. Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?"

Tim Whitmarsh account of the first "true" historian

Thucydides's History of the Peloponnesian War is the culmination of the fifth century tendency toward the exclusion of divine explanation. Not only does he refuse to admit non-naturalistic causality, but he cynically skewers any attempts on the part of the actors in his story to invoke the gods. Whatever his own personal beliefs were, the History can reasonably be claimed to be the earliest surviving atheist narrative of human history.

Steven Weinberg description of the first philosopher, scientist and mathematician (Thales)

This god statement, however, has been interpreted to mean that forces that were the god, or something to this effect, e.g. soul, is a thing akin to or an embodiment of the magnetic force. Thales asserted, supposedly, that the loadstone's moving of the iron was caused by itself rather than by the intervention of some god. Others have asserted that Thales model was atheistic.

Jennifer Hecht description of Anaximander (610-546 BC)

The first philosopher for whom we have any detail, and he explained the world without reference to gods.

Xenophanes (560-475 BC) (we was an atheist on the Homeric gods but was the first pandeist/monotheist)

Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all sorts of things that are matters of reproach and censure among men: theft, adultery, and mutual deception, as they sang of numerous illicit divine deeds: theft, adultery, and mutual deceit.

Heraclitus (535-450 BC)

This world order, the same for all beings, was created neither by gods nor by humans; rather, it was always and is and will be eternal living fire kindled in measures and quenched in measure.

Empedocles (495-435 BC)

If horses could draw, god would have four limbs and run very fast.

Socrates (470-399 BC)

The point which I should first wish to understand is whether the pious or holy is beloved by the gods because it is holy, or holy because it is beloved of the gods.

Anaxagoras (5th century BC)

Everything has a natural explanation. The moon is not a god but a great rock and the sun a hot rock.

Leucippus (5th century BC)

The worlds are formed when atoms fall into the void and are entangled with one another; and from their motion as they increase in bulk arises the substance of the stars.

Democritus (460-370 BC)

Nothing exists except atoms and empty space; everything else is opinion.

Prodicus of Ceos (465-395 BC)

The ancients thought that sun and moon and rivers and springs, and in general everything that benefits the life of men were gods, because of the benefit coming from them.

Pliny the elder (23-79) (naturalistic pantheism)

Some nations have animals even repulsive creatures as gods. To believe that some gods are always old and grey-haired, while others are young men and boys, or lame, born from eggs, or who live and die on alternate days—such beliefs are little short of the fantasies of children.

Ibn al-Rawandi (827-880)

Muhammad's own presuppositions and systems show that religious traditions are not trustworthy. The Jews and Christians say that Jesus really died, but the Quran [Surah 4:157] contradicts them. Indeed, the Prophet brought that which contradicts reason, such as ritual prayer, ritual cleansing from impurity, throwing stones at pillars during Haji, and walking around a house that cannot hear nor see, or dashing between two rocky mounds that can neither benefit nor harm them. All of this has nothing to do with reason. So what is the difference between the hills of Safa and Marwa, and the hills of Abu Qubays and Hira? And walking round the holy house is no different than walking round any other houses.

Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (865-925)

How come do you deem it necessary that God would single out some for prophecsy and some not, and give them privilege over the people as their guides, and make people dependent on them? And how come do you deem it fitting the wisdom of the All-wise [God] to choose this for them, inciting one against another, enforcing enmities among them, increasing war among them, and thus bringing death upon the people? By these worthless stupidities he intended to butteres his claims and to expose the fradulent tricks and senseless myth. [...] You are talking about a work which recounts ancient myths, and which at the same time is full of contradictions. By God what you say astonishes us! You are talking about a work which recounts ancient myths, and which at the same time is full of contradictions and does not contain any useful information or explanation. You claim that the evidentiary miracle is present and available, namely the Koran. You say: Whoever denies it, let him produce a similar one. Indeed, we shall produce a thousand similar, from the works of rhetoricians, eloquent speakers and valiant poets, which are more appropriately phrased and state the issues more succinctly. They convey the meaning better and their rhymed prose is in better meter. By God what you say astonishes us! You are talking about a work which recounts ancient myths, and does not contain any useful information or explanation. Then you say: Produce something like it? If the people of this religion are asked about the proof for the soundness of their religion, they flare up, get angry and spill the blood of whoever confronts them with this question. They forbid rational speculation, and strive to kill their adversaries. This is why truth became thoroughly silenced and concealed.

Al-Maʿarri (973–1057)

There two kinds of humans, the intelligent who have no religion and the religious who have no intellect.

Djad ibn Dirham (715-724)

God did not speak to Moses, nor take Abraham as a friend.

Omar Khayyam (1048-1131)

The Koran! Well, come put me to the test; lovely old book in hideous error drest. Believe me, I can quote the Koran too; the unbeliever knows his Koran best. And do you think that unto such as you, a maggot-minded, starved, fanatic crew, god gave the secret, and denied it me? Well, well, what matters it! Believe that too.

Abu Isa al-Warraq (889-994)

That Muhammad could predict certain events does not prove that he was a prophet: he may have been able to guess successfully, but this does not mean that he had real knowledge of the future. And certainly the fact that he was able to recount events from the past does not prove that he was a prophet, because he could have read about those events in the Bible and, if he was illiterate, he could still have had the Old Testament read to him. God is an idiot, because he who orders his slave to do things that he knows him be incapable of doing, then punishes him, is a fool. If Humans

are capable of figuring out that, for instance, it is good to be forgiving, then a prophet is unnecessary, and we should not heed the claims of self-appointed prophets, if what is claimed is found to be contrary to good sense and reason. I admire the intellect not for its capacity to submit to a god, but rather for its inquisitiveness towards the wonders of science. People developed the science of astronomy by gazing at the sky, no prophet was necessary to show them how to gaze; also, no prophets were needed to show them how to make flutes, either, or how to play them.

Baruch Spinoza - A Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being (1632-1677) (pantheism)

To take appeal to the will of god is to take refuge in the asylum of ignorance.

Baruch Spinoza - Tractatus Theologico-Politicus

All things happen according to the laws of nature.

Hrafnkell (10th century)

I think it is folly to have faith in gods.

Michel Montaigne – Essays (where he express his atheism “edited various quotes”) (1533-1592)

Diagoras and Theodorus flatly deny that there were ever gods at all. Socrates thought and so do I that the wisest theory about the gods is no theory at all. How many things do we name miraculous and against nature? Each man and every nation doth it according to the measure of his ignorance. Man is completely crazy: he does not know who to fabricate a worm, but he fabricates gods by the dozen, and not only does he fabricate them by the dozen but, he fabricates them by the thousands and indicates exactly how far their power extends. Crates and Dicaearchus were of opinion that there was no soul at all, but that the body thus stirs by a natural motion; Plato, that it was a substance moving of itself; Thales, a nature without repose; Asclepiades, an exercising of the senses; Hesiod and Anaximander, a thing composed of earth and water; Parmenides, of earth and fire; Empedocles, of blood, e.g. "He vomits up his bloody soul" (Sanguineam vomit ille animam). Posidonius, Cleanthes, and Galen that it was heat or a hot complexion: “their vigor of fire and of heavenly race” (Ignens est ollis vigor, et coelestis origo). Hippocrates, a spirit diffused all over the body; Varro, that it was an air received at the mouth, heated in the lungs, moistened in the heart, and diffused throughout the whole body; Zeno, the quintessence of the four elements ["I know not," says Mr. Coste, "where Montaigne had this; for Cicero expressly says that this quintessence, or fifth nature is a thought of Aristotle, who makes the soul to be composed of it; and that Zeno thought the soul to be fire." (Cicero, Tusc. Quaes, i.9). After this, Cicero adds, "that Aristotle calls the mind, which he derives from that fifth nature entelechia [entelechy], a new-coined word, signifying a perpetual motion." Though Montaigne has copied these last words, in what he proceeds to tell us of Aristotle, he censures him for not having spoken of the origin and nature of the soul. But had he only cast his eye upon what Cicero had said a little before, he would have been convinced that Aristotle had taken care to explain himself concerning the origin of the soul,

before he remarked the effect of it If he has not thereby fully demonstrated what the nature of it is, Zeno has not given us much better light into it when he says, "the soul or mind seems to be fire"; and it would not be difficult to show that in this article the other philosophers have not succeeded better than Zeno and Aristotle] ; Heraclides Ponticus, that it was the light; Zenocrates and the Egyptians, a mobile number; the Chaldeans, a virtue without any determinate form: “A certain vital habit in man's frame, which harmony the Grecian sages name” (Habitum quemdam vitalem corporis ease, Harmonium Grseci quam dicunt.) Let us not forget Aristotle, who held the soul to be that which naturally causes the body to move, which he calls entelechia [entelechy], with as cold an invention as any of the rest; for he neither speaks of the essence, nor of the original, nor of the nature of the soul, but only takes notice of the effect. Lactantius, Seneca, and most of the dogmatists, have confessed that it was a thing they did not understand. Heraclitus, who was of opinion that every being was full of souls and demons, did nevertheless maintain that no one could advance so far towards the knowledge of the soul as ever to arrive at it; so profound was the essence of it.

Confucius (551-479 BC)

We don’t know yet how to serve men, how can we know about serving the spirits?

Lao Tzu (601-531 BC)

Life is a series of natural and spontaneous changes. Don't resist them - that only creates sorrow. Let reality be reality. Let things flow naturally forward in whatever way they like.

Sextus Empiricus (160-210 CE) – Outlines of Pyrrhonism, Book III Chapter III

Concerning God since then the majority have declared that God as the most efficient cause let us begin by inquiring about God first premises that although following the ordinary view we affirm undogmatically that gods exist and reverence gods and ascribed to them for knowledge yet as against the rashness of the dogmatists we argue as follows when we conceive objects we ought to form conceptions of their substances as well as for instance whether their corporeal are incorporeal and also of their forms for no one could conceive horse unless he had first learned the horse’s form and of course the object conceived must be conceived as existing somewhere since then some of the dogma to assert that God has corporeal others that he is incorporeal in some he has human form others not in some he exist in space others not and of those who assert that he is in space some put him inside the world others outside how shall we be able to reach conception of God when we have no agreement about his substances or his form or his place of abode let them first agree in consent together that God is of such and such a nature and then when they have sketched out for us that nature let them require that you should form a conception of God but so long as they disagree interminably we cannot say what agreed notion we are to derive from them but say they when you have conceived of a being imperishable and blessed regard this as God but this is foolish for just as one who does not know dion is unable also to conceive the properties which belong to him as dion so also when we do not know the substance of God we should also be unable to learn and conceive his properties and apart from this let them tell us what a blessed thing is whether it

is that which energizes according to virtue and for knows what is subject to itself are that which is void of energy and neither performs any world itself nor provides work for another for indeed about this also they disagree interminably and thus render the blessed something we cannot conceive and therefore God also further in order to form a conception of God one must necessarily so far depends the dogmatist suspend judgment as to existence or nonexistence for the existence of God is nor pre-evident for if God impressed us automatically the dogmatist would agree together regarding his essence his character and his places whereas their interminable disagreement has mad him seem to us non evident and needing demonstration now he that demonstrates the existence of God does so by means of what is either pre-evident are non-evident certainly not then by means of the pre-evident first what demonstrates god's existence were pre-evident then since the thing proved is conceived together with that which proves it and therefore is apprehended with it as well as we have establish God's existence also will be pre-evident it being apprehended along with the pre-evident fact which proves it but as we have shown it is not pre-evident thereford it is not proved either by a pre-evident fact nor yet by what is non-evident for if the non-evident fact which is capable of proving God's existence needing proof as it does shall said to be proved by means of pre-evident fact it will be no longer be non-evident but pre-evident thereford the non-evident fact which proves its existence is not proved by what is pre-evident nor yet what is not-evident for he who asserts this will be driven into circular reasoning when we keep demanding proof every time for the non-evident fact which he produces as proof of the one last propounded consequently the existence of God cannot be proved from any other fact but God's existence is neither automatically pre-evident nor proved from another fact it will be in apprehensible there is this also to be said he who affrism that God exist either declares that he has our that he has not for thought for the things in the universe and the former case that such for thought is for all things are for somethings but if he had for thought for all there would have been nothing bad and no badness in the world yet all things they say are full of badness hence it shall not be said that God for thinks all things if again he for thinks some why does he for think these things and not those for either he has both will and the power to for think all things or else he has the will but not the power are the power but not the will are neither the will nor the power but if he had both the will and the power he would have forethought for all things but for the reasons stated above he does not for think all thereford he was not both the will and the power to for think all and if he has the will but not the power he is less strong than the cause which renders him unable to for think what he does not for think but it is contrary to our notion of God that he should be weaker than anything and if again he has the power but not the will to have form for thought for all he will be held to be malignant well if he has neither the will nor the power he is both malignant and weak an impious thing to say about God thereford God has no forethought for the things in the universe but if he exercises no forethought for anything and there exist no work nor product of his no one will be able to name the source of the apprehension of God's existence and much as he neiter appears of himself nor apprehended by means of any of his products so for these reasons we cannot apprehend whether God exist and from this we further conclude that those who positively affirm God's existence are probably compelled to be guilty of impiety for they say that he for thinks all things they will be declaring that God is the cause of what is evil while if they say that for think somethings are nothing they will be forced to say that God is either malignant or weak and obviosly this is to use in pious language.

Theophrastus Redivivus (1600-1700)

I use the teachings of the philosophers and thinkers of antiquity to show that god does not exist, that the world is eternal, that the soul is mortal, that hell is nothing but a fairy tale, and that religion is a political artifice. A cunning deception is that death is detestable, because nothing stifles him [it?]. Thus, I have divided the work, as Theophrastus of Eresus did it, into six books: the first on the gods, the second on the world, the third on religion, the fourth on the soul and on hell, the fifth on the contempt of death, the sixth on the natural life. All this belongs to the argument with the gods. If it has been proved that the gods do not exist, the rest understands itself.

Frederick II the Holy Roman Emperor and the first modern ruler (1194-1250)

Tell me where you see god in the universe?

Treaties of the Three Imposters by Frederick II - Chapter I: Of God (1235) (Epicurean deist)

Although it is important that all men should know the truth, there are nevertheless few who enjoy this advantage; some are incapable of finding it out unassisted, and others will not put themselves to the trouble. It is not to be wondered at therefore, if the world is filled with vain and absurd opinions; and nothing is more adapted to spread them than ignorance, which is the sole originator of the false ideas which prevail as to the Divinity, the Soul, the existence of Spirits, and almost all the other subjects which go to make up Theology. Custom is powerful—men rest contented in the prejudices of their birth, and leave the care of the most essential matters to interested parties, who make it a rule to uphold with bigotry the received opinions, and who dare not overturn them lest in so doing they should destroy themselves. What renders the evil without remedy is this, that, after having established these false ideas of the Divinity, they neglect no plan to compel the people to believe in them, without permitting any one to examine for himself. On the contrary, they have excited a hatred against philosophers—the truly learned, lest the doctrines which they would teach should lead to the exposure of those errors in which they have plunged mankind. The advocates of these foolish notions have succeeded so well, that it is dangerous to combat them. It is too much the interest of those impostors that the people be ignorant, to permit them to become enlightened. Thus the truth must either be kept in abeyance, or its promoters be prepared to be sacrificed at the shrine of a false philosophy, and to suffer from the rage of grovelling and interested minds. If the people could understand into what an abyss they are sunk by ignorance, they would speedily shake off the yoke of their unworthy leaders, for it is impossible not to discover the truth when reason is left to its unrestrained exercise. These deceivers are so well aware of this, that to prevent the good effects which Truth would infallibly produce, they have painted it as a monster incapable of giving rise to any virtuous sentiment; although, in general terms, they condemn unreasonable people, they would nevertheless be much disconcerted if the truth were heard. Thus these sworn enemies to common sense are perpetually falling into contradictions, and it is difficult to discover at what they are aiming. If it be true that reason is the only light which men ought to follow, and if the people are not so incapable of judging as they wish us to believe, it ought to be the object of those who

instruct them to endeavour to rectify the false reasonings, and to uproot their prejudices; then their eyes would be gradually opened and their minds convinced that the Deity is by no means what is generally supposed. To attain this, there is no need for lofty speculations, nor for penetrating far into the mysteries of nature. It requires only a little common sense to perceive that the Deity is neither choleric nor jealous; that justice and mercy are alike falsely considered as his attributes; and that, all that the Prophets and Apostles have said give us no information either as to his nature, or to his essence. In short to speak plainly and to put the matter on its proper footing, it will be allowed that these teachers were neither more able nor better instructed than the rest of mankind; so far from that being the case, what they advance regarding the Deity is so gross that the people must be altogether ignorant to credit it. Although this is apparent enough we will attempt to explain it more at length, by inquiring, if there is any evidence that the Prophets and Apostles were differently constituted from other men. It is agreed, that as far as descent, and the common duties of life are implicated, they possessed no quality to mark them out from the rest of mankind. They were begotten by men, they were born of women, and they sustained themselves as we do in the present day. In reference to their minds, people would have us believe that God dealt with these prophets in a way differing from that wherein he deals with ordinary mortals, and that he disclosed himself to them in a manner quite exclusive. Many persons consider this matter as a proved and ascertained fact, without reflecting that every man may meet his counterpart, and that we have one common origin; endeavouring at the same time to persuade us that these men were cast in no common mould and that they were selected by the Deity to proclaim his oracles. Now, apart from the consideration that these inspired people were gifted with only an average intellect, and with an understanding not much above the common, what do we find in their writings to justify us in forming so exalted an opinion of them? The matter of which they treat is for the most part so obscure that no one can comprehend it, and thrown together with so little order that it is easy to perceive they did not understand it themselves; the whole showing that they were both knaves and fools. Their impudence in boasting that whatever they announced to the people came immediately from God, gave rise to the respect which was paid to them. This assertion on their part was equally absurd and ridiculous, seeing that according to their own declaration God only spoke to them in dreams. There is nothing more natural than that a man should dream; but a man must be very impudent, very vain, and very stupid, to say that God speaks to him in this manner, and a poor and credulous fool must he be who should yield credence to such an assertion, and receive the dreams of such visionaries for heavenly oracles. Suppose for a moment that the Deity were to hold intercourse with a man by dreams, or visions, or in any other way we can think of; nobody is obliged to believe this on the mere assertion of a fellow-creature equally subject to error with himself, and moreover, fallible in the way of lying and imposture. Accordingly we find that under the ancient law, the prophets were held in far less repute than they are at the present day. When people got wearied of their babble, which often only tended to spread revolt and to turn aside subjects from obedience to their sovereigns, they silenced them by punishment. Jesus Christ himself did not escape chastisement, for he had not, like Moses1, an army at his back to defend his opinions. Add to this, that the prophets were so much accustomed to contradict each other, that out of four hundred of them not one true or truth-speaking man could be found. Moreover it is certain that the drift of their prophesies, like that of the laws promulgated by the most celebrated legislators, was to immortalize their memory by persuading people that they had conferences with

the Divinity. The most subtle politicians have invariably played the same game, although this ruse has not succeeded with every one as it did with Moses. This being settled, let us examine for a little the idea which the Prophets have formed of the Deity. According to their account, God is a being purely corporeal. Michael saw him seated; Daniel beheld him clothed in white, and under the form of an Old Man; Ezekiel perceived him as a Fire: so much for the Old Testament. With respect to the New, the disciples of Jesus Christ imagined that they saw him in the form of a Dove; the Apostles, like Tongues of Fire; and finally, St. Paul beheld him as a Light, which dazzled and blinded him. Then as to their contradictory statements; in the Book of Genesis3 we are informed that man is the master of his own actions, and that it only depends upon himself to do what is right. St. Paul on the other hand asserts that man has no control over his evil propensities without the particular grace of God. Samuel4 declares that the Deity repented of the evil which he had brought on men: and Jeremiah5 affirms that he repented, or on certain conditions that he would repent, of the good which he had done them. Such are the false and contradictory ideas which those pretenders to inspiration give us of the divinity; and which they wish us to adopt without reflecting that they represent the Deity as a sensitive Being, material, and subject to like passions with ourselves. Next they inform us that God has nothing in common with matter, and that his nature is altogether incomprehensible by us. It would be important to learn how these manifest and irrational contradictions can be reconciled; and whether we ought to put much faith in the evidence of a people who, in spite of the sermons of Moses, were stupid enough to believe that a calf was their God! Without dwelling on the reveries of a people cradled in bondage and brought up in absurdity, it is sufficient to remark, that ignorance has produced a belief in all the impostures and errors which prevail amongst us at the present day.

Niccolo Machiavelli – The Prince (1469-1527)

Christian principles seem to me to have made men feeble, and caused them to become an easy prey to evil-minded men, who can control them more securely, seeing that he great body of men, for the sake of gaining paradise, are more disposed to endure injuries than to avenge them.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

I count religion but a childish toy, And hold there is no sin but ignorance. Birds of the air will tell of murders past. I am asham'd to hear such fooleries!

Etienne Dolet (1509-1546)

Death? Let us not fear its blows. It will either grant us to be without feeling or it will allow us to enter a better world and a happy state—unless our hope of Elysium is entirely groundless.

Kazimierz Łyszczyński - On the non-existence of God (1634-1689)

I – we beseech you, o' theologians, by your God, if in this manner do you not extinguish the light of Reason, do you not oust the sun from this world, do you not pull down your God from the sky, when attributing to him the impossible, whereof the characteristics and attributes contradict themselves.

II – Man is the creator of God, and God is a concept and creation of Man. Hence people are the architects and engineers of God, and God is not a true being but a being existing only within the mind; being chimeric by its nature, because a God and a chimera are the same thing.

III – Religion was constituted by people without religion, so they could be worshipped although the God is not existent. Piety was introduced by the unpietic. The fear of God was spread by the unafraid so that the people were afraid of them in the end. Devotion named godly is a design of Man. Doctrine, be it logical or philosophical, bragging to be teaching the truth of God, is false, and on the contrary, the one condemned as false, is the very true one.

IV – simple folk are cheated by the more cunning with the fabrication of God for their own oppression; whereas the same oppression is shielded by the folk in a way, that if the wise attempted to free them by the truth, they would be quelled by the very people.

V – nevertheless we do not experience within us and within any other such an imperative of reason, which would ensure us of a truth of divine revelation. Alas if they were present in us, then everyone would have to acknowledge them and would have no doubts and would not contradict the Writings of Moses and the Gospels – which is not true – and there would be no different congregations and their followers as Mahomet etc. Such an imperative is not known and there are not only doubts, but there are some who deny a revelation, and they are not fools, but wise men, who with a proper reasoning prove what? the very contrary, what I also prove here. Concluding, that God does not exist.

Lucretius (99-55 BC) – On The Nature of Things (nothing exists per se except atoms and the void)

But, now again to weave the tale begun, All nature, then, as self-sustained, consists Of twain of things: of bodies and of void In which they're set, and where they're moved around. For common instinct of our race declares That body of itself exists: unless This primal faith, deep-founded, fail us not, Naught will there be whereunto to appeal On things occult when seeking aught to prove By reasonings of mind. Again, without That place and room, which we do call the inane, Nowhere could bodies then be set, nor go Hither or thither at all—as shown before. Besides, there's naught of which thou canst declare It lives disjoined from body, shut from void— A kind of third in nature. For whatever Exists must be a somewhat; and the same, If tangible, however fight and slight, Will yet increase the count of body's sum, With its own augmentation big or small; But, if intangible and powerless ever To keep a thing from passing through itself On any side, 'twill be naught else but that Which we do call the empty, the inane. Again, whate'er exists, as of itself, Must either act or suffer action on it, Or else be that wherein things move and be: Naught, saving body, acts, is acted on; Naught but the inane can furnish room. And thus, Beside the inane and bodies, is no third Nature amid the number of all things—Remainder none to fall at any time Under our senses, nor be seized and seen By any man through reasonings of mind. Name o'er creation with what names thou wilt, Thou'lt find but properties of those first twain, Or see but accidents those twain produce. A property is that which not at all Can be disjoined and severed from a thing Without a fatal dissolution: such, Weight to the rocks, heat to the fire, and flow To the wide waters, touch to corporal things, Intangibility to the viewless void. But state of slavery, pauperhood, and wealth,

Freedom, and war, and concord, and all else Which come and go whilst nature stands the same, We're wont, and rightly, to call accidents. Even time exists not of itself; but sense Reads out of things what happened long ago, What presses now, and what shall follow after: No man, we must admit, feels time itself, Disjoined from motion and repose of things. Thus, when they say there "is" the ravishment Of Princess Helen, "is" the siege and sack Of Trojan Town, look out, they force us not To admit these acts existent by themselves, Merely because those races of mankind (Of whom these acts were accidents) long since Irrevocable age has borne away: For all past actions may be said to be But accidents, in one way, of mankind,— In other, of some region of the world. Add, too, had been no matter, and no room Wherein all things go on, the fire of love Upblown by that fair form, the glowing coal Under the Phrygian Alexander's breast, Had ne'er enkindled that renowned strife Of savage war, nor had the wooden horse Involved in flames old Pergama, by a birth At midnight of a brood of the Hellenes. And thus thou canst remark that every act At bottom exists not of itself, nor is As body is, nor has like name with void; But rather of sort more fitly to be called An accident of body, and of place Wherein all things go on.

Matthias Knutzen (1646-1674) - A conversation between a latin host and three guests of different religions held at altona, not far from hamburg (the first atheist/anarchist literature that survive in its entirely “fiction”)

N.B.: I. means innkeeper.

G. means guests.

g. greetings, innkeeper.

i. many thanks. welcome here.

g. mr. innkeeper, can we buy something to eat and drink from you?

i. very well; please sit down, while my wife brings it to you.

g. let us pray. but, dear innkeeper, why don’t you pray with us?

i. what does the prayer do? the food and drink still tastes great without the prayer.

g. you could be our guest.

i. what, shall i be a guest then? you are my guests; but i’ll remain the innkeeper. you sirs, begging pardon, what are your names, so i can call on you, and which religion do you belong to?

g. i, father ursinus, am catholic. - i, growler, am a lutheran. - i, bear, am of the reformed faith.

i. it would be desirable that, just as all three of you have one kind of name, that you would have only one religion. but you, sirs, tell me, do all three of you follow the bible?

g. yes; yes; yes

I. How, then, comes it that you, along with the Arians, the Armenians, David Joriten, and others, others, all of whom follow the Bible, can’t find any agreement? The problem must lie either with

you or with the Bible. But I remember that, in my student days, I once read that the Bible itself is the true manna, in the book of Wisdom ch. 16 v. 20, anyone, be he Catholic or Lutheran, Reformed or Armenian, according to his taste, or, like an innkeeper, to be everyone's friend, for which every heretic, also the Devil himself is apt, who is a writer himself, says, also note that these, among others, came from there, since any word in the Bible has, not only one, but a variety of interpretations, therefore nobody can draw any conclusions from the Bible: in truth, one is against the other, and what is commanded in one place is forbidden in another. If that is so, wouldn't you sirs be better like me, to be a cheerful Studiosus Juris or a soup-student, who knows no doubt.

G. It's nothing new that a word in the Bible should have more than one meaning, since we also have in common usage such words as NAIL, which can mean both a nail on the hand and also in the wall. Also: MAHLEN refers both to grinding and painting, but the entire German language isn't equivocal for all that. In those places where my meaning clashes with that of another, sir, you should know that these are only apparentes contradictiones, that is, apparent but not true contractions.

I. I've heard all this before at the universities, while I was still partying, I mean studying. Only, good sirs, explain to me how a word in the German language can have 7 or even 10 meanings, as words like spirit, faith, law, today, world, and so forth, have in the Bible? Contradictions matter, so I answer your answer that est & non est, Yes and No are not apparent, but true contradictio or contradictions, such as WITNESS, in John 15:27. In Acts 3:15 etc., and DO NOT WITNESS, John 5:34. Same with HEAR in Acts 9:7, and DO NOT HEAR in Acts 22:9. THE DEAD RISE, John 5:29. THE DEAD DO NOT RISE. Isaiah 26:14, Psalm 88:12, Job 14:22. So, will Luke 14:14 say that the righteous and Luke 20:35, that the worthy and unworthy will be resurrected? But there is no righteous man alive, Psalm 134:3. We are all unworthy and useless servants, Luke 17:10. Therefore it necessarily follows that ALSO NONE OF THE DEAD WILL RISE, etc. If this is not a true contradictio or contradiction, you must have missed something in your classes on dialectica.

G. Mr. Innkeeper, you're being unfair; we had, ever since the prayer before dinner, a willingness to hold our tongues; then perhaps there would have been no occasion to think about religion and the Bible.

I. Why, sirs, don't you leave now, I'm happy for my guests to chatter at the table, for then they eat little, I get to keep the food, and they still pay up, whether they eat a lot or little.

G. You're a clever man, and not only in argumentation, as was already said, but also as to your inn. But nevertheless, as you began by asking us which religion we belonged to, now please also tell us, to which religion, then, do you belong?

I. A new one.

G. Might you be an atheist and no Christian?

I. That is true; I believe in no God, nor do I accept your Bible, except to refute you: I also say that all priests and authority must be driven from the world, since people can live well without these things.

G. So, it's no wonder that you refrained from the prayer; but we're curious at the way the King of Denmark allows you to stay here in Altona since you despise authority.

I. I'm no less worthy than the king of Denmark, since in your Bible, your so-called God has called him, like myself and other men, in Genesis 1, to dominion over the fish, etc., which He also reiterates after the Deluge in Genesis 9:2. He doesn't say dominion over men, as the King of Denmark assumes, since men also existed before the existence of Adam, from whom Cain took a wife, and of whom Cain was afraid, Genesis 4:14, and also with other arguments, as has been demonstrated in the Latin Tractatus de Prae-Adamitis. But consider Christian authority, if you live by these words of your God, that those subjects are not allowed, such as hunting etc., but it seems that the Christian so-called authority itself heeds the Bible no more than I do.

G. So you don't much care for Christian people?

I. Softly, good sirs, unlike you, I'm not from bear country: don't worry, I won't eat you. For, if I, as I believe in no God, live like a God, just like your Enoch, in Genesis 5:24 and your Noah, in Genesis 6:9: not according to the Bible, which didn't then exist, but according to their science and conscience, as my fellow-believers and I have lived. I also get along very well with Christians, partly because my co-religionists and I refrain from making their Christ a liar. Luke 18:8. Also partly because they call the new religion the CONSCIENTARIAN (GEWISSENER) one, about which you can certainly inquire.

G. Eh! What, a new religion? We'd like to ask you to tell us, to start with, about its creator.

I. This will be done; listen carefully. Matthias Cnutzen: born in Eiderstedt at Oldenswort, an organist's son, whose father was called Berend Knutzen, and his mother Elizabeth. He, having been to the universities, both at Königsberg, Copenhagen and the like, then coming to Holstein and seeing, there in his own land more than elsewhere, almost all preachers were drowning in money and ambition; also as there was no promotion available, except to become a Doctor, Licentiatus, or at least a Magister, Matthias Knutzen opted not to seek any fame, for otherwise he might well have been named a Doctor, which nobody did for him, instead he therefore sought a modest military post, he set out to become a Magister, and later on to issue a Licentiatum Theologiae and other titles, somewhat like when Aaron's sons were called to be priests. See Centur. 1 Canon D. Finckii, whether it wasn't a similar case; but which in the future will be purchased, or how Gideon the thresher, in Judges 6:11-12, was called a mighty warrior, if what happened back then wasn't so, it never will be, since it wasn't Gideon, but God working through him who did such deeds, according to the Biblical doctrine, etc., in light of which Matthiae Knutzen remains blameless, since he is as zealous for the Holy Scriptures, also with and according to the writings of his youth, however unlearned, employed in Psalm 119:19. As now, this man who, according to the Bible, called himself a Licentiat. Theologiae at the fortress at Krempe in the year 1673 on the third Christmas holiday, after noon, to tell the truth; at that time the General Superintendent or rather the Danish Pope / Mr. Johann Hudelmann (the Pope's name will change) had gathered his Cardinals, of whom, Dornhold (I mean Bornhold) was preeminent, he thereupon turned hostile, forbidding the use of the pulpit. Whereupon Matthias often traveled to Rome and elsewhere, writing letter upon letter to all universities in the world, in which he proves, at great

length, that the entire Bible is at war with itself etc. For he, along with others: the good, honest, but poor workers and peasants, everywhere sees authority as the greedy brotherhood of Felix (Acts 24:26), along with the priests, as those to whom they must surrender their sweat and blood: to wit, gold in the sacred tollbooth in the confessional for absolution, gold for summons, gold for marrying, gold for baptism, gold for permissions, gold for thanksgiving, gold for the funeral, gold for the service of the dead, gold as a salary. Thus, each of them is their own Bible again: Micah 3:11, Acts 20:33 and 35, Acts 3:6, 1 Cor. 9:18, Matt. 10:8. He has shown the world another, far better Bible, which everyone carries within themselves: that is, Reason, or SCIENCE (das WISSEN), still, not one only, but many men: Luke 24:39, see, etc. UNITED WITH CONSCIENCE (GEWISSEN). This conscience, he says, among other explanations, was implanted in our flesh by our good mother, which we, in our one life, our Bible: Romans 2:14-15, yes, it's both preacher and authority, but it teaches without asking a penny, TO LIVE HONORABLY; HARM NONE; and TO GIVE TO EACH THEIR OWN. Whoever lives a good life is Heaven's, Prov. 15:15, whoever does evil suffers more than 1000 torments, and Hell itself, and no other one is to be awaited, as Lutherus T. XI. Germ. Witteb. p.m. 249, B. p.p., says. Whoever despises this Bible, despises himself.

G. What does he think then about schools and their staff?

I. He esteems it far higher than even Christians do, and wants those who work there should be well paid, especially if they are impressively morose and well-groomed. He's seized with wonder at the fact that Christians even allow schools, since their GOD commanded no such thing anywhere in the Bible.

G. What's his view on marriage?

I. He says that, according to the Bible, there is no difference between marriage and fornication: for Moses and Paul, the former in Genesis 2:24, the latter in 1 Cor. 6:16, the same word is used for marriage and fornication. And in 1 Cor. 7:2, a wife is likened to a whore. Thus, a child of marriage, no less than a whore's child, might pray with David (Psalm 51:7[10]): "in sin did my mother conceive me." So, what does the Priestly marrying and sanctification actually sanctify? Surely, according to the Bible, there is no difference between fornication and marriage except the exchange of rings, summons and marrying, which are human statutes, and aimed at God in vain (Matt. 15:9). God commanded nobody to do such things in the Bible. In sum, just as it's not sinful to eat blood nowadays, fornication is also driven away; given that it's considered lesser than the other things mentioned in Acts 15:29, which we allow. Given Matt. 5:28, he asks the Christians how can anyone avoid adultery, since everyone can do it without even having sleeping with anyone.

G. What a fine religion indeed, for poor and rich, for the learned and ignorant. They should congratulate you, and so shall we.

I. Great. Now, my wife or my whore, as the Christians' Bible calls you, please clear up, these sirs will eat no more.

G. Driver, prepare the team. Good innkeeper, how much do we owe you?

I. Two Reichsthaler.

G. That’s not much, here you go. Keep well.

I. Same to you.

Baron d’Holbach – The System of Nature or, the Laws of the Moral and Physical World (Of Theism.—Of the System of Optimism.—Of final Causes)

Very few men have either the courage or the industry to examine opinions, which every one is in agreement to acknowledge; there is scarcely any one who ventures to doubt their truth, even when no solid arguments have been adduced in their support. The natural supineness of man readily receives them without examination upon the authority of others—communicates them to his successors in the season of their infancy; thus is transmitted from race to race, notions which once having obtained the sanction of time, are contemplated as clothed with a sacred character, although perhaps to an unprejudiced mind, who should be bent on searching into their foundation, no proofs will appear, that they ever were verified. It is thus with immateriality: it has passed current from father to son for many ages, without these having done any thing more than habitually consign to their brain those obscure ideas which were at first attached to it, which it is evident, from the admission even of its advocates, can never be removed, to admit others of a more enlightened nature. Indeed how can it possibly be, that light can be thrown upon an incomprehensible subject: each therefore modifies it after his own manner; each gives it that colouring that most harmonizes with his own peculiar existence; each contemplates it under that perspective which is the issue of his own particular vision: this from the nature of things cannot be the same in every individual: there must then of necessity be a great contrariety in the opinions resulting. It is thus also that each man forms to himself a God in particular, after his own peculiar temperament—according to his own natural dispositions: the individual circumstances under which he is found, the warmth of his imagination, the prejudices he has received, the mode in which he is at different times affected, have all their influence in the picture he forms. The contented, healthy man, does not see him with the same eyes as the man who is chagrined and sick; the man with a heated blood, who has an ardent imagination, or is subject to bile, does not pourtray him under the same traits as he who enjoys a more peaceable soul, who has a cooler fancy, who is of a more phlegmatic habit. This is not all; even the same individual does not view him in the same manner at different periods of his life: he undergoes all the variations of his machine—all the revolutions of his temperament—all those continual vicissitudes which his existence experiences. The idea of the Divinity is said to be innate; on the contrary, it is perpetually fluctuating in the mind of each individual; varies every moment in all the beings of the human species; so much so, that there are not two who admit precisely the same Deity; there is not a single one, who, under different circumstances, does not see him variously.

Do not then let us be surprised at the variety of systems adopted by mankind on this subject; it ought not to astonish us that there is so little harmony existing among men upon a point of such consequence; it ought not to appear strange that so much contradiction should prevail in the various

doctrines held forth; that they should have such little consistency, such slender connection with each other; that the professors should dispute continually upon the rectitude of the opinions adopted by each: they must necessarily wrangle upon that which each contemplates so variously—upon which there is hardly a single mortal who is constantly in accord with himself.

All men are pretty well agreed upon those objects which they are enabled to submit to the test of experience; we do not hear any disputes upon the principles of geometry; those truths that are evident, that are easily demonstrable, never vary in our mind; we never doubt that the part is less than the whole; that two and two make four; that benevolence is an amiable quality; that equity is necessary to man in society. But we find nothing but perpetual controversy upon all those systems which have the Divinity for their object; they are full of incertitude; subject to continual variations: we do not see any harmony either in the principles of theology, or in the principles of its graduates. Even the proofs offered of his existence have been the subject of cavil; they have either been thought too feeble, have been brought forward against rule, or else have not been taken up with sufficient zeal to please the various reasoners who advocate the cause; the corollaries drawn from the premises laid down, are not the same in any two nations, scarcely in two individuals; the thinkers of all ages, in all countries, are perpetually in rivalry with each other; unceasingly quarrel upon all the points of religion; can never agree either upon their theological hypotheses, or upon the fundamental truths which should serve for their basis; even the attributes, the very qualities ascribed, are as warmly contested by some, as they are zealously defended by others.

These never-ending disputes, these perpetual variations, ought, at least, to convince the unprejudiced, that the ideas of the Divinity have neither the generally-admitted evidence, nor the certitude which are attributed to them; on the contrary, these contrarieties in the opinions of the theologians, if submitted to the logic of the schools, might be fatal to the whole of them: according to that mode of reasoning, which at least has the sanction of our universities, all the probabilities in the world cannot acquire the force of a demonstration; a truth is not made evident but when constant experience, reiterated reflection, exhibits it always under the same point of view; the evidence of a proposition cannot be admitted unless it carries with it a substantive demonstration; from the constant relation which is made by well constituted senses, results that evidence, that certitude, which alone can produce full conviction: if the major proposition of a syllogism should be overturned by the minor, the whole falls to the ground. Cicero, who is no mean authority on such a subject, says expressly, "No reasoning can render that false, which experience has demonstrated as evident." Wolff, in his Ontology, says; "That which is repugnant in itself, cannot possibly be understood; that those things which are in themselves contradictions, must always be deficient of evidence." St. Thomas says, "Being, is all that which is not repugnant to existence."

However it may be with these qualities, which the theologians assign to their immaterial beings, whether they may be irreconcileable, or whether they are totally incomprehensible, what can result to the human species in supposing them to have intelligence and views? Can an universal intelligence, whose care must be equally extended to every thing that exists, have more direct, more intimate relations with man, who only forms an insensible portion of the great whole? Can we seriously believe that it is to make joyful the insects, to gratify the ants of his garden, that the Monarch of the universe has constructed and embellished his habitation? Would our feeble eyes,

therefore, become stronger—would our narrow views of things be enlarged—should we be better capacitated to understand his projects—could we with more certitude divine his plans, enter into his designs—would our exility of judgment be competent to measure his wisdom, to follow the eternal order he has established? Will those effects, which flow from his omnipotence, emanate from his providence—whether we estimate them as good, or whether we tax them as evil—whether we consider them beneficial, or view them as prejudicial—be less the necessary results of his wisdom, of his justice, of his eternal decrees? In this case can we reasonably suppose that a Being, so wise, so just, so intelligent, will derange his system, change his plan, for such weak beings as ourselves? Can we rationally believe we have the capacity to address worthy prayers, to make suitable requests, to point out proper modes of conduct to such a Being? Can we at all flatter ourselves that to please us, to gratify our discordant wishes, he will alter his immutable laws? Can we imagine that at our entreaty he will take from the beings who surround us their essences, their properties, their various modes of action? Have we any right to expect he will abrogate in our behalf the eternal laws of nature, that he will disturb her eternal march, arrest her ever-lasting course, which his wisdom has planned; which his goodness has conferred; which are, in fact, the admiration of mankind? Can we hope that in our favour fire will cease to burn, when we approximate it too closely; that fever shall not consume our habit, when contagion has penetrated our system; that gout shall not torment us, when an intemperate mode of life shall have amassed the humours that necessarily result from such conduct; that an edifice tumbling in ruins shall not crush us by its fall, when we are within the vortex of its action? Will our vain cries, our most fervent supplications, prevent a country from being unhappy, when it shall be devastated by an ambitious conqueror; when it shall be submitted to the capricious will of unfeeling tyrants, who bend it beneath the iron rod of their oppression?

If this infinite intelligence gives a free course to those events which his wisdom has prepared; if nothing happens in this world but after his impenetrable designs; we ought silently to submit; we have in fact nothing to ask; we should be madmen to oppose our own weak intellect to such capacious wisdom; we should offer an insult to his prudence if we were desirous to regulate them. Man must not flatter himself that he is wiser than his God; that he is in a capacity to make him change his will; with having power to determine him to take other means than those which he has chosen to accomplish his decrees. An intelligent Divinity can only have taken those measures which embrace complete justice; can only have availed himself of those means which are best calculated to arrive at his end; if he was capable of changing them, he could neither be called wise, immutable, nor provident. If it was to be granted, that the Divinity did for a single instant suspend those laws which he himself has given, if he was to change any thing in his plan, it would be supposing he had not foreseen the motives of this suspension; that he had not calculated the causes of this change; if he did not make these motives enter into his plan, it would be saying he had not foreseen the causes that render them necessary: if he has foreseen them without making them part of his system, it would be arraigning the perfection of the whole. Thus in whatever manner these things are contemplated, under whatever point of view they are examined, it is evident that the prayers which man addresses to the Divinity, which are sanctioned by the different modes of worship, always suppose he is supplicating a being whose wisdom and providence are defective; in fact, that his own is more appropriate to his situation. To suppose he is capable of change in his conduct, is to bring his omniscience into question; to vitally attack his omnipotence; to arraign his

goodness; at once to say, that he either is not willing or not competent to judge what would be most expedient for man; for whose sole advantage and pleasure they will, notwithstanding, insist he created the universe: such are the inconsistent doctrines of theology; such the imbecile efforts of metaphysics.

It is, however, upon these notions, extravagant as they may appear, ill directed as they assuredly are, inconclusive as they must be acknowledged by unprejudiced minds, that are founded all the superstitions and many of the religions of the earth. It is by no means an uncommon sight, to see man upon his knees before an all-wise God, whose conduct he is endeavouring to regulate; whose decrees he wishes to avert; whose plan he is desirous to reform. These inconsistent objects he is occupied with gaining, by means equally repugnant to sound sense; equally injurious to the dignity of the Divinity: adopting his own sensations as the criterion of the feelings of the Deity; in some places he tries to win him to his interests by presents; sometimes we behold even the princes of the earth attempting to direct his views, by offering him splendid garments, upon which their own fatuity sets an inordinate value, merely because they have laboured at them themselves; some strive to disarm his justice by the most splendid pageantry; others by practices the most revolting to humanity; some think his immutability will yield to idle ceremonies; others to the most discordant prayers; it not unfrequently happens that to induce him to change in their favour his eternal decrees, those who have opposite interests to promote, each returns him thanks for that which the others consider as the greatest curse that can befal them. In short, man is almost every where prostrate before an omnipotent God, who, if we were to judge by the discrepancy of their requests, never has rendered his creatures such as they ought to be; who to accomplish his divine views has never taken the proper measures, who to fulfil his wisdom has continual need of the admonitions of man, conveyed either in the form of thanks or prayers.

We see, then, that superstition is founded upon manifest contradictions, which man must always fall into when he mistakes the natural causes of things—when he shall attribute the good or evil which he experiences to an intelligent cause, distinguished from nature, of which he will never be competent to form to himself any certain ideas. Indeed, man will always be reduced, as we have so frequently repeated, to the necessity of clothing his gods with his own imbecile qualities: as he is himself a changeable being, whose intelligence is limited; who, placed in divers circumstances, appears to be frequently in contradiction with himself; although he thinks he honours his gods in giving them his own peculiar qualities, he in fact does nothing more than lend them his own inconstancy, cover them with his own weakness, invest them with his own vices. It is thus that in reasoning, he is unable to account for the necessity of things—that he imagines there is a confusion which his prayers will have a tendency to remove—that he thinks the evils of life more than commensurate with the good: he does not perceive that an undeviating system, by operating upon beings diversely organized, whose circumstances are different, whose modes of action are at variance, must of necessity sometimes appear to be inimical to the interests of the individual, while it embraces the general good of the whole. The theologian may subtilize, exaggerate, render as unintelligible as he pleases, the attributes with which he clothes his divinities, he will never be able to remove the contradictions which arise from the discordant qualities which he thus heaps together; neither will he be able to give man any other mode of judging than what arises from the exercise of his senses, such as they are actually found. He will never be able to furnish the idea of

an immutable being, while he shall represent this being as capable of being irritated and appeased by the prayers of mortals. He will never delineate the features of omnipotence under the portrait of a being who cannot restrain the actions of his inferiors. He will never hold up a standard of justice, while he shall mingle it with mercy, however amiable the quality; or while he shall represent it as punishing those actions, which the perpetrators were under the necessity of committing. Neither will he be able, under any circumstances, to make a finite mind comprehend infinity; much less when he shall represent this infinity as bounded by finity itself.

From this it will be obvious, that immaterial substances, such as are depicted by the theologians, can only be looked upon as the offspring of a metaphysical brain, unsupported by any of those proofs which are usually required to establish the propositions laid down among men; all the qualities which they ascribe to them, are only those which are suitable to material substances; all the abstract properties with which they invest them, are incomprehensible by material beings; the whole taken together, is one confused mass of contradictions: they have held forth to man, that it highly imported to his interests to know, to understand these substances; he has consequently set his intellect in action to discover some means of compassing an end, said to be so consequential to his welfare; he has, however, been unable to make any progress, because no clue could be offered to him of the road he must pursue; all was mere assertion unsupported by evidence; the whole was enveloped in complete darkness, into which the least scintillation of light could never penetrate. Notwithstanding, as soon as man believes himself greatly interested in knowing a thing, he labors to form to himself an idea of that, the knowledge of which he thinks so important; if insuperable obstacles impede his inquiries—if difficulties of a magnitude to alarm his industry intervene—if with immense labour he makes but little progress, then the slender success that attends his research, aided by a slothful disposition, while it wearies his diligence disposes him to credulity. It was thus, that a crafty ambitious Arab, subtle and knavish in his manners, insinuating in his address, profiting by this credulous inclination, made his countrymen adopt his own fanciful reveries as permanent truths, of which it was not permitted them for an instant to doubt; following up these opinions with enthusiasm, he stimulated them on to become conquerors; obliging the conquered to lend themselves to his system, he gave currency to a creed, invented solely for the purpose of enslaving mankind, which now spreads over immense regions inhabited by a numerous population, although like other systems it does not escape sectarianism, having above seventy branches. Thus ignorance, despair, sloth, the want of reflecting habits, place the human race in a state of dependance upon those who build up systems, while upon the objects which are the foundations, they have no one settled idea: once adopted, however, whenever these systems are brought into question, man either reasons in a very strange manner, or else is the dupe of very deceitful arguments: when they are agitated, and he finds it impossible to understand what is said concerning them when his mind cannot embrace the ambiguity of these doctrines, he imagines those who speak to him are better acquainted with the objects of their discourse than himself; these seizing the favourable opportunity, do not let it slip, they reiterate to him with Stentorian lungs, "That the most certain way is to agree with what they tell him; to allow himself to be guided by them;" in short, they persuade him to shut his eyes, that he may with greater perspicuity distinguish the road he is to travel: once arrived at this influence, they indelibly fix their lessons; irrevocably chain him to the oar; by holding up to his view the punishments intended for him by these imaginary beings, in case he refuses to accredit, in the most liberal manner, their marvellous

inventions; this argument, although it only supposes the thing in question, serves to close his mouth—to put an end to his research; alarmed, confused, bewildered, he seems convinced by this victorious reasoning—attaches to it a sacredness that fills him with awe—blindly conceives that they have much clearer ideas of the subject than himself—fears to perceive the palpable contradictions of the doctrines announced to him, until, perhaps, some being, more subtle than those who have enslaved him, by labouring the point incessantly, attacking him on the weak side of his interest, arrives at throwing the absurdity of his system into light, and finally succeeds by inducing him to adopt that of another set of speculators. The uninformed man generally believes his priests have more senses than himself; he takes them for superior beings; for divine men. He only sees that which these priests inform him he must contemplate; to every thing else his eyes are completely hoodwinked; thus the authority of the priests frequently decides, without appeal, that which is useful perhaps only to the priesthood.

When we shall be disposed to recur to the origin of things, we shall ever find that it has been man's imagination, guided by his ignorance, under the influence of fear, which gave birth to his gods; that enthusiasm or imposture have generally either embellished or disfigured them; that credulity readily adopted the fabulous accounts which interested duplicity promulgated respecting them; that these dispositions, sanctioned by time, became habitual. Tyrants finding their advantage in sustaining them, have usually established their power upon the blindness of mankind, and the superstitious fears with which it is always accompanied. Thus, under whatever point of view it is considered, it will always be found that error cannot be useful to the human species.

Nevertheless, the happy enthusiast, when his soul is sensible of its enjoyments, when his softened imagination has occasion to paint to itself a seducing object, to which he can render thanks for the kindness he experiences, will ask, "Wherefore deprive me of a being that I see under the character of a sovereign, filled with wisdom, abounding in goodness? What comfort do I not find in figuring to myself a powerful, intelligent, indulgent monarch, of whom I am the favorite; who continually occupies himself with my welfare—unceasingly watches over my safety—who perpetually administers to my wants—who always consents that under him I shall command the whole of nature? I believe I behold him constantly showering his benefits on man; I see his Providence labouring for his advantage without relaxation; he covers the earth with verdure to delight him; he loads the trees with delicious fruits to gratify his palate; he fills the forests with animals suitable to his nourishment; he suspends over his head planets with innumerable stars, to enlighten him by day, to guide his erring steps by night; he extends around him the azure firmament to gladden his sight; he decorates the meadows with flowers to please his fancy; he causes crystal fountains to flow with limpid streams to slake his thirst; he makes rivulets meander through his lands to fructify the earth; he washes his residence with noble rivers, that yield him fish in abundance. Ah! suffer me to thank thee, Author of so many benefits: do not deprive me of my charming sensations. I shall not find my illusions so sweet, so consolatory in a severe destiny—in a rigid necessity—in a blind inanimate matter—in a nature destitute of intelligence, devoid of feeling."

"Wherefore," will say the unfortunate, from whom his destiny has rigorously withheld those benefits which have been lavished on so many others; "wherefore ravish from me an error that is dear to me? Wherefore annihilate to me a being, whose consoling idea dries up the source of my

tears—who serves to calm my sorrows? Wherefore deprive me of an object which I represent to myself as a compassionate, tender father; who reproves me in this world, but into whose arms I throw myself with confidence, when the whole of nature appears to have abandoned me? Supposing it no more than a chimera, the unhappy have occasion for it, to guarantee them against frightful despair: is it not cruel, is it not inhuman, to be desirous of plunging them into a vacuum, by seeking to undeceive them? Is it not an useful error, preferable to those truths which deprive the mind of every consolation, which do not hold forth any relief from its sorrows?"

Thus will equally reason the Negro, the Mussulman, the Brachman, and others. We shall reply to these enthusiasts, no! truth can never render you unhappy; it is this which really consoles us; it is a concealed treasure, much superior to all the superstitions ever invented by fear; it can cheer the heart; give it courage to support the burthens of life; make us smile under adversity; elevate the soul; render it active; furnishes it with means to resist the attacks of fate; to combat misfortunes with success. This will shew clearly that the good and evil of life are distributed with an equal hand, without respect to man's peculiar comforts; that all beings are equally regarded in the universe; that every thing is submitted to necessary laws; that man has no right whatever to think himself a being peculiarly favoured—who is exempted from the common operations of the eternal routine; that it is folly to think he is the only being considered—one for whose enjoyment alone every thing is produced; an attention to facts will suffice to put an end to this delusion, however pleasant may be the indulgence of such a notion; the most superficial glance of the eye will be sufficient to undeceive us in the idea, that he is the final cause of the creation—the constant object of the labours of nature, or of its Author. Let us seriously ask him, if he does not witness good constantly blended with evil? If he does not equally partake of them with the other beings in nature? To be obstinately bent to see only the evil, is as irrational as to be willing only to notice the good. Providence seems to be just as much occupied for one class of beings as for another. We see the calm succeed the storm; sickness give place to health; the blessings of peace follow the calamities of war; the earth in every country bring forth roots necessary for the nourishment of man, produce others suitable to his destruction. Each individual of the human species is a compound of good and bad qualities; all nations present a varied spectacle of virtues, growing up beside vices; that which gladdens one being, plunges another into sadness—no event takes place that does not give birth to advantages for some, to disadvantages for others. Insects find a safe retreat in the ruin of the palace, which crushes man in its fall; man by his death furnishes food for myriads of contemptible insects; animals are destroyed by thousands that he may increase his bulk; linger out for a season a feverish existence. We see beings engaged in perpetual hostility, each living at his neighbour's expence; the one banquetting upon that which causes the desolation of the other; some luxuriously growing into flesh upon the misery which wears others into skeletons—profiting by misfortunes, rioting upon disasters, which ultimately, reciprocally destroy them. The most deadly poisons spring up beside the most wholesome fruits the earth equally nourishes the fatal steel which terminates man's career, and the fruitful corn that prolongs his existence; the bane and its antidote are near neighbours, repose on the same bosom, ripen under the same sun, equally court the hand of the incautious stranger. The rivers which man believes flow for no other purpose than to irrigate his residence, sometimes swell their waters, overtop their banks, inundate his fields, overturn his dwelling, and sweep away the flock and shepherd. The ocean, which he vainly imagines was only collected together to facilitate his commerce supply him with fish, and wash

his shores; often wrecks his ships, frequently bursts its boundaries, lays waste his lands, destroys the produce of his industry, and commits the most frightful ravages. The halcyon, delighted with the tempest, voluntarily mingles with the storm; rides contentedly upon the surge; rejoiced by the fearful howlings of the northern blast, plays with happy buoyancy upon the foaming billows, that have ruthlessly dashed in pieces the vessel of the unfortunate mariner; who, plunged into an abyss of misery, with tremulous emotion clings to the wreck; views with horrific despair, the premature destruction of his indulged hopes; sighs deeply at the thoughts of home; with aching heart, thinks of the cherished friends his streaming eyes will never more behold in an agony of soul dwells upon the faithful affection of an adored wife, who will never again repose her drooping head upon his manly bosom; grows wild with the appalling remembrance of beloved children, his wearied arms will never more encircle with parental fondness; then sinks for ever, the unhappy victim of circumstances that fill with glee the fluttering bird, who sees him yield to the overwhelming force of the infuriate waves. The conqueror displays his military skill, fights a sanguinary battle, puts his enemy to the rout, lays waste his country, slaughters thousands of his fellows, plunges whole districts into tears, fills the land with the moans of the fatherless, the wailings of the widow, in order that the crows may have a banquet—that ferocious beasts may gluttonously gorge themselves with human gore—that worms may riot in luxury.

Thus when there is a question concerning an agent we see act so variously; whose motives seem sometimes to be advantageous, sometimes disadvantageous for the human race; at least each individual will judge after the peculiar mode in which he is himself affected; there will consequently be no fixed point, no general standard in the opinions men will form to themselves. Indeed our mode of judging will always be governed by our manner of seeing, by our way of feeling. This will depend upon our temperament, which itself springs out of our organization, and the peculiarity of the circumstances in which we are placed; these can never be the same for all the beings of our species. These individual modes of being affected, then, will always furnish the colours of the portrait which man may paint to himself of the Divinity; it must therefore be obvious they can never be determinate—can have no fixity—can never be reduced to any graduated scale; the inductions which they may draw from them, can never be either constant or uniform; each will always judge after himself, will never see any thing but himself or his own peculiar situation in the picture he delineates.

This granted, the man who has a contented, sensible soul, with a lively imagination, will paint the Divinity under the most charming traits; he will believe that he sees in the whole of nature nothing but proofs of benevolence, evidence of goodness, because it will unceasingly cause him agreeable sensations. In his poetical extacy he will imagine he every where perceives the impression of a perfect intelligence—of an infinite wisdom—of a providence tenderly occupied with the welfare of man; self-love joining itself to these exalted qualities, will put the finishing hand to his persuasion, that the universe is made solely for the human race; he will strive in imagination to kiss with transport the hand from which he believes he receives so many benefits; touched with his kindness, gratified with the perfume of roses whose thorns he does not perceive, or which his extatic delirium prevents him from feeling, he will think he can never sufficiently acknowledge the necessary effects, which he will look upon as indubitable testimony of the divine predilection for man. Completely inebriated with these feelings, this enthusiast will not behold those sorrows,

will not notice that confusion of which the universe is the theatre: or if it so happens, he cannot prevent himself from being a witness, he will be persuaded that in the views of an indulgent providence, these calamities are necessary to conduct man to a higher state of felicity; the reliance which he has in the Divinity, upon whom he imagines they depend, induces him to believe, that man only suffers for his good; that this being, who is fruitful in resources, will know how to make him reap advantage from the evils which he experiences in this world: his mind thus pre-occupied, from thence sees nothing that does not elicit his admiration call forth his gratitude; excite his confidence; even those effects which are the most natural, the most necessary, appear in his eyes miracles of benevolence; prodigies of goodness: he shuts his eyes to the disorders which could bring these amiable qualities into question: the most cruel calamities, the most afflicting events, the most heart-rending circumstances, cease to be disorders in his eyes, and do nothing, more than furnish him with new proofs of the divine perfections; he persuades himself that what appears defective or imperfect, is only so in appearance; he admires the wisdom, acknowledges the bounty of the Divinity, even in those effects which are the most terrible for his race—most suitable to discourage his species—most fraught with misery for his fellow.

It is, without doubt, to this happy disposition of the human mind, in some beings of his order, that is to be ascribed the system of Optimism, by which enthusiasts, furnished with a romantic imagination, seem to have renounced the evidence of their senses: to find that even for man every thing is good in nature, where the good has constantly its concomitant evil, and where minds less prejudiced, less poetical, would judge that every thing is only that which it can be—that the good and the evil are equally necessary—that they have their source in the nature of things; moreover, in order to attribute any particular character to the events that take place, it would be needful to know the aim of the whole: now the whole cannot have an aim, because if it had a tendency, an aim, or end, it would no longer be the whole, seeing that that to which it tended would be a part not included.

It will be asserted by some, that the evils which we behold in this world are only relative, merely apparent; that they prove nothing against the good: but does not man almost uniformly judge after his own mode of feeling; after his manner of co-existing with those causes by which he is encompassed; which constitute the order of nature with relation to himself; consequently, he ascribes wisdom and goodness to all that which affects him pleasantly, disorder to that state of things by which he is injured. Nevertheless every thing which we witness in the world conspires to prove to us, that whatever is, is necessary; that nothing is done by chance; that all the events, good or bad, whether for us or for beings of a different order, are brought about by causes acting after certain and determinate laws; that nothing can he a sufficient warrantry in us to clothe with any one of our human qualities, either nature or the motive-power which has been given to her.

With respect to those who pretend that supreme wisdom will know how to draw the greatest benefits for us, even out of the bosom of those calamities which it is permitted we shall experience in this world; we shall ask them, if they are themselves the confidents of the Divinity; or upon what they found these assertions so flattering to their hopes? They will, without doubt, tell us they judge by analogy; that from the actual proofs of goodness and wisdom, they have a just right to conclude in favour of future bounty. Would it not be a fair reply to ask, If they reason by analogy,

and man has not been rendered completely happy in this world, what analogy informs them he will be so in another? If, according to their own shewing, man is sometimes made the victim of evil in his present existence, in order that he may attain a greater good, does not analogical reasoning, which they say they adopt, clearly warrant a deduction, that the same afflictions, for the same purposes, will be equally proper, equally requisite in the world to come?

Thus this language founds itself upon ruinous hypotheses, which have for their bases only a prejudiced imagination. It, in fact, signifies nothing more than that man once persuaded, without any evidence, of his future happiness, will not believe it possible he can be permitted to be unhappy: but might it not be inquired what testimony does he find, what substantive knowledge has he obtained of the peculiar good that results to the human species from those sterilities, from those famines, from those contagions, from those sanguinary conflicts, which cause so many millions of men to perish; which unceasingly depopulate the earth, and desolate the world we inhabit? Is there any one who has sufficient compass of comprehension to ascertain the advantages that result from the evils that besiege us on all sides? Do we not daily witness beings consecrated to misfortune, from the moment they quitted the womb of the parent who brought them into existence, until that which re-committed them to the earth, to sleep in peace with their fathers; who with great difficulty found time to respire; lived the constant sport of fortune; overwhelmed with affliction, immersed in grief, enduring the most cruel reverses? Who is to measure the precise quantity of misery required to derive a certain portion of good? Who is to say when the measure of evil will be full which it is necessary to suffer?

The most enthusiastic Optimists, the Theists themselves, the partizans of Natural Religion, as well as the most credulous and superstitious, are obliged to recur to the system of another life, to remedy the evils man is decreed to suffer in the present; but have they really any just foundation to suppose the next world will afford him a happiness denied him in this? If it is necessary to recur to a doctrine so little probable as that of a future existence, by what chain of reasoning do they establish their opinion, that when he shall no longer have organs, by the aid of which he is at present alone enabled either to enjoy or to suffer, he shall be able to compensate the evils he has endured; to enjoy a felicity, to partake of a pleasure this organic structure has refused him while on his pilgrimage through the land of his fathers.

From this it will be seen, that the proofs of a sovereign intelligence, or of a magnified human quality drawn from the order, from the harmony, from the beauty of the universe, are never more than those which are derived from men who are organized and modified after a certain mode; or whose cheerful imagination is so constructed as to give birth to agreeable chimeras which they embellish according to their fancy: these illusions, however, must be frequently dissipated even in themselves, whenever their machine becomes deranged; when sorrows assail them, when misfortune corrodes their mind; the spectacle of nature, which under certain circumstances has appeared to them so delightful, so seducing, must then give place to disorder, must yield to confusion. A man of melancholy temperament, soured by misfortunes, made irritable by infirmities, cannot view nature and her author under the same perspective, as the healthy man of a sprightly humour, who is contented with every thing. Deprived of happiness, the fretful man can only find disorder, can see nothing but deformity, can find nothing but subjects to afflict himself

with; he only contemplates the universe as the theatre of malice, as the stage for tyrants to execute their vengeance; he grows superstitious, he gives way to credulity, and not unfrequently becomes cruel, in order to serve a master whom he believes he has offended.

In consequence of these ideas, which have their growth in an unhappy temperament, which originate in a peevish humour, which are the offspring of a disturbed imagination, the superstitious are constantly infected with terror, are the slaves to mistrust, the creatures of discontent, continually in a state of fearful alarm. Nature cannot have charms for them; her countless beauties pass by unheeded; they do not participate in her cheerful scenes; they look upon this world, so marvellous to the happy man, so good to the contented enthusiast, as a valley of tears, in which a vindictive fate has placed them only to expiate crimes committed either by themselves or by their fathers; they consider themselves as sent here for no other purpose than to be the sharers of calamity; the sport of a capricious fortune; that they are the children of sorrow, destined to undergo the severest trials, to the end that they may everlastingly arrive at a new existence, in which they shall be either happy or miserable, according to their conduct towards the ministers of a being who holds their destiny in his hands. These dismal notions have been the source of all the irrational systems that have ever prevailed; they have given birth to the most revolting practices, currency to the most absurd customs. History abounds with details of the most atrocious cruelties, under the imposing name of public worship; nothing has been considered either too fantastical or too flagitious by the votaries of superstition. Parents have immolated their children; lovers have sacrificed the objects of their affection; friends have destroyed each other: the most bloody disputes have been fomented; the most interminable animosities have been engendered, to gratify the whim of implacable priests, who by crafty inventions have obtained an influence over the people; to please blind zealots, who have never been able either to give fixity to their ideas, or to define their own feelings. Idle dreamers nourished with bile, intoxicated with theologic fury—atrabilarians, whose melancholic humour frequently disposes them to wickedness—visionaries, whose devious imaginations, heated with intemperate zeal, generally leads them to the extremes of fanaticism, working upon ignorance, whose usual bias is credulity, have incessantly disturbed the harmony of mankind, kindled the inextinguishable flame of discord, and in an almost uninterrupted succession, strewed the earth with the mangled carcasses of the multitudinous victims to mad-brained error, whose only crime has been their incapacity to dream according to the rules prescribed by these infuriate maniacs; although these have never been uniform—never assimilated in any two countries—never borne the same features in any two ages, nor even had the united concurrence of the persecuting contemporaries.

It is then in the diversity of temperament, arising from variety of organization—in the contrariety of passions, springing out of this miscellany, modified by the most opposite circumstances, that must be sought the difference we find in the opinions of the theist, the optimist, the happy enthusiast, the zealot, the devotee, the superstitious of all denominations; they are all equally irrational—the dupes of their imagination—the blind children of error. What one contemplates under a favorable point of view, the other never looks upon but on the dark side; that which is the object of the most sedulous research to one set, is that which the others most seek to avoid: each insists he is right; no one offers the least shadow of substantive proof of what he asserts; each points out the great importance of his mission, yet cannot even agree with his colleagues in the

embassy, either upon the nature of their instructions, or the means to be adopted. It is thus whenever man sets forth a false supposition, all the reasonings he makes on it are only a long tissue of errors, which entail on him an endless series of misfortunes; every time he renounces the evidence of his senses, it is impossible to calculate the bounds at which his imagination will stop; when he once quits the road of experience, when he travels out of nature, when he loses sight of his reason, to strike into the labyrinths of conjecture, it is difficult to ascertain where his folly will lead him—into what mischievous swamps this ignis fatuus of the mind may beguile his wandering steps. It is certainly true, the ideas of the happy enthusiast will be less dangerous to himself, less baneful to others, than those of the atrabilarious fanatic, whose temperament may render him both cowardly and cruel; nevertheless the opinions of the one and of the other will not be less chimerical; the only difference will be, that of the first will produce agreeable, cheerful dreams; while that of the second will present the most appalling visions, terrific spectres, the fruit of a peevish transport of the brain: there will, however, never be more than a step between them all; the smallest revolution in the machine, a slight infirmity, an unforeseen affliction, suffices to change the course of the humours—to vitiate the temperament—to endanger the organization—to overturn the whole system of opinions of the happiest. As soon as the portrait is found disfigured, the beautiful order of things is overthrown relatively to himself; melancholy grapples him—pusillanimity benumbs his faculties—by degrees plunges, him into the rankest depths of gloomy superstition; he then degenerates into all those irregularities which are the dismal harvest of fanatic ignorance ploughed with credulity.

Those ideas, which have no archetype but in the imagination of man, must necessarily take their complexion from his own character; must be clothed with his own passions; must constantly follow the revolutions of his machine; be lively or gloomy; favourable or prejudicial; friendly or inimical; sociable or savage; humane or cruel; according as he whose brain they inhabit shall himself be disposed; in fact, they can never be more than the shadow of the substance he himself interposes between the light and the ground on which they are thrown. A mortal plunged from a state of happiness into misery, whose health merges into sickness, whose joy is changed into affliction, cannot in these vicissitudes preserve the same ideas; these naturally depend every instant upon the variations, which physical sensations oblige his organs to undergo. It will not therefore appear strange that these opinions should be fluctuating, when they depend upon the state of the nervous fluid, upon the greater or less portion of igneous matter floating in the sanguinary vessels.

Theism, or what is called Natural Religion, cannot have certain principles; those who profess it must necessarily be subject to vary in their opinions—to fluctuate in their conduct, which flows out of them. A system founded upon wisdom and intelligence, which can never contradict itself, when circumstances change will presently be converted into fanaticism; rapidly degenerate into superstition; such a system, successively meditated by enthusiasts of very distinct characters, must of necessity experience vicissitudes, and quickly depart from its primitive simplicity. The greater part of those philosophers who have been disposed to substitute theism for superstition, have not felt that it was formed to corrupt itself—to degenerate. Striking examples, however, prove this fatal truth. Theism is almost every where corrupted; it has by degrees given way to those superstitions, to those extravagant sects, to those prejudicial opinions with which the human species is degraded. As soon as man consents to acknowledge invisible powers out of nature, upon

which his restless mind will never be able invariably to fix his ideas—which his imagination alone will be capable of painting to him; whenever he shall not dare to consult his reason relatively to those powers, it must necessarily be, that the first false step leads him astray, that his conduct as well as his opinions becomes in the long run perfectly absurd.

Those are usually called Theists, who, undeceived upon the greater number of grosser errors to which the uninformed, the superstitiously ignorant, tend the most determined support, simply hold the notion of unknown agents endowed with intelligence, wisdom, power and goodness, in short, full of infinite perfections, whom they distinguish from nature, but whom they clothe after their own fashion; to whom they ascribe their own limited views; whom they make act according to their own absurd passions. The religion of Abraham appears to have originally been a kind of theism, imagined to reform the superstition of the Chaldeans; Moses modified it, and gave it the Judaical form. Socrates was a theist, who lost his life in his attack on polytheism; his disciple Aristocles, or Plato, as he was afterwards called from his large shoulders, embellished the theism of his master, with the mystical colours which he borrowed from the Egyptian and Chaldean priests, which he modified in his own poetical brain, and preserved a remnant of polytheism. The disciples of Plato, such as Proclus, Ammonius, Jamblicus. Plotinus, Longinus, Porphyrus, and others, dressed it up still more fantastically, added a great deal of superstitious mummery, blended it with magic, and other unintelligible doctrines. The first doctors of Christianity were Platonists, who combined the reformed Judaism with the philosophy taught in Academia. Mahomet, in combating the polytheism of his country, seems to have been desirous of restoring the primitive theism of Abraham, and his son Ishmael; yet this has now seventy-two sects. Thus it will be obvious, that theism has no fixed point, no standard, no common measure more than other systems: that it runs from one supposition to another, to find in what manner evil has crept into the world. Indeed it has been for this purpose, which perhaps after all will never be satisfactorily explained, that the doctrine of free-agency was introduced; that the fable of Prometheus and the box of Pandora was imagined; that the history of the Titanes was invented; notwithstanding, it must be evident that these things as well as all the other trappings of superstition, are not more difficult of comprehension than the immaterial substances of the theists; the mind who can admit that beings devoid of parts, destitute of organs, without bulk, can move matter, think like man, have the moral qualities of human nature, need not hesitate to allow that ceremonies, certain motions of the body, words, rites, temples, statues, can equally contain secret virtues; has no occasion to withhold its faith from the concealed powers of magic, theurgy, enchantments, charms, talismans, &c.; can shew no good reason why it should not accredit inspirations, dreams, visions, omens, soothsayers, metamorphoses, and all the host of occult sciences: when things so contradictory to the dictates of reason, so completely opposed to good sense are freely admitted, there can no longer be an thing which ought to possess the right to make credulity revolt; those who give sanction to the one, may without much hesitation believe whatever else is offered to their credence. It would be impossible to mark the precise point at which imagination ought to arrest itself—the exact boundary that should circumscribe belief—the true dose of folly that may be permitted them; or the degree of indulgence that can with safety be extended to those priests who are in the habit of teaching so variously, so contradictorily, what man ought to think on the subjects they handle so advantageously to themselves; who when it becomes a question what remuneration is due from mankind for their unwearied exertions in his favour, are, in spite of all their other differences, in

the most perfect union; except perhaps when they come to the division of the spoil: in this, indeed, the apple of discord sometimes takes a tremendous roll. Thus it will be clear that there can be no substantive grounds for separating the theists from the most superstitious; that it becomes impossible to fix the line of demarcation, which divides them from the most credulous of men; to shew the land-marks by which they can be discriminated from those who reason with the least conclusive persuasion. If the theist refuses to follow up the fanatic in every step of his cullibility, he is at least more inconsequent than the last, who having admitted upon hearsay an inconsistent, whimsical doctrine, also adopts upon report the ridiculous, strange means which it furnishes him. The first sets forth with an absurd supposition, of which he rejects the necessary consequences; the other admits both the principle and the conclusion. There are no degrees in fiction any more than in truth. If we admit the superstition, we are bound to receive every thing which its ministers promulgate, as emanating from its principle. None of the reveries of superstition embrace any thing more incredible than immateriality; these reveries are only corollaries drawn with more or less subtilty from unintelligible subjects, by those who have an interest in supporting the system. The inductions which dreamers have made, by dint of meditating on impenetrable materials, are nothing more than ingenious conclusions, which have been drawn with wonderful accuracy, from unknown premises, that are modestly offered to the sanction of mankind by enthusiasts, who claim an unconditional assent, because they assure us no one of the human race is in a capacity either to see, feel, or comprehend the object of their contemplation. Does not this somewhat remind us of what Rabelais describes as the employment of Queen Whim's officers, in his fifth book and twenty-second chapter?

Let us then acknowledge, that the man who is this most credulously superstitious, reasons in a more conclusive manner, or is at least more consistent in his credulity, than those, who, after having admitted a certain position of which they have no one idea, stop short all at once, and refuse to accredit that system of conduct which is the immediate, the necessary result of a radical and primitive error. As soon as they subscribe to a principle fatally opposed to reason, by what right do they dispute its consequences, however absurd they may be found? We cannot too often repeat, for the happiness of mankind, that the human mind, let it torture itself as much as it will, when it quits visible nature leads itself astray; for want of an intelligent guide it wanders in tracks that bewilder its powers, and is quickly obliged, to return into that with which it has at least some, acquaintance. If man mistakes nature and her energies, it is because he does not sufficiently study her—because he does not submit to the test of experience the phenomena he beholds; if he will obstinately deprive her of motion, he can no longer have any ideas of her. Does, he, however, elucidate his embarrassments, by submitting her action to the agency of a being of which he makes himself the model? Does he think he forms a god, when he assembles into one heterogeneous mass, his own discrepant qualities, magnified until his optics are no longer competent to recognize them, and then unites to them certain abstract properties of which he cannot form to himself any one conception? Does he, in fact, do more than collect together that which becomes, in consequence of its association, perfectly unintelligible? Yet, strange as it may appear, when he no longer understands himself—when his mind, lost in its own fictions, becomes inadequate to decipher the characters he has thus promiscuously assembled—when he has huddled together a heap of incomprehensible, abstract qualities, which he is obliged to acknowledge are the mere creatures of imagination, not within the reach of human intellect, he firmly persuades himself he

has made a most accurate and beautiful portrait of the Divinity; he ostentatiously displays his picture, demands the eulogy of the spectator, and quarrels with all those who do not agree to adulate his creative powers, by adopting the inconceivable being he holds forth to their worship; in short, to question the existence of his extravaganza, rouses his most bitter reproaches; elicits his everlasting scorn; entails on the incredulous his eternal hatred.

On the other hand, what could we expect from such a being, as they have supposed him to be? What could we consistently ask of him? How make an immaterial being, who has neither organs, space, point, or contact, understand that modification of matter called voice? Admit that this is the being who moves nature—who establishes her laws—who gives to beings their various essences—who endows them with their respective properties; if every thing that takes place is the fruit of his infinite providence—the proof of his profound wisdom, to what end shall we address our prayers to him? Shall we solicit him to acknowledge that the wisdom and providence with which we have clothed him, are in fact erroneous, by entreating him to alter in our favour his eternal laws? Shall we give him to understand our wisdom exceeds his own, by asking, him for our pleasure to change the properties of bodies—to annihilate his immutable decrees—to trace back the invariable course of things—to make beings act in opposition to the essences with which he has thought it right to invest them? Will he at our intercession prevent a body ponderous and hard by its nature, such as a stone, for example, from wounding, in its fall a sensitive being such as the human frame? Again, should we not, in fact, challenge impossibilities, if the discordant attributes brought into union by the theologians were correct; would not immutability oppose itself to omnipotence; mercy to the exercise of rigid justice; omniscience, to the changes that might be required in foreseen plans? In physics, in consequence of the general research after a perpetual motion, science has drawn forth the discovery, that by amalgamating metals of contrary properties, the contractile powers of one kind, under given circumstances which cause the dilation of the other, by their opposite tendencies neutralize the actual effects of each, taken separately, and thus produce an equality in the oscillations, that, neither possessed individually.

It will perhaps, be insisted, that the infinite science of the Creator of all things, is acquainted with resources in the beings he has formed, which are concealed from imbecile mortals; that consequently without changing any thing, either in the laws of nature, or in the essence of things, he is competent to produce effects which surpass the comprehension of our feeble understanding; that these, effects will in no wise be contrary to that order which he himself has established in nature. Granted: but then I reply, first, that every thing which is conformable to the nature of things, can neither be called supernatural nor miraculous: many things are, unquestionably, above our comprehension; but then all that is operated in the world is natural—grows out of those immutable laws by which nature is regulated. In the second place, it will be requisite to observe, that by the word miracle an effect is designed, of which, for want of understanding nature, she is believed incapable. In the third place, it is worthy of remark, that the theologians, almost universally, insist that by miracle is meant not an extraordinary effort of nature, but an effect directly opposite to her laws, which nevertheless they equally challenge to have been prescribed by the Divinity. Buddaeus says, "a miracle is an operation by which the laws of nature, upon which depend the order and the preservation of the universe, are suspended." If, however, the Deity, in those phenomena that most excite our surprise, does nothing more than give play to springs unknown to mortals, there is, then,

nothing in nature, which, in this sense, may not be looked upon as a miracle; because the cause by which a stone falls is as unknown to us, as that which makes our globe turn on its own axis. Thus, to explain the phenomena of nature by a miracle, is, in other words, to say we are ignorant of the actuating causes; to attribute them to the Divinity, is to agree we do not comprehend the resources of nature: it is little better than accrediting magic. To attribute to a sovereignly intelligent, immutable, provident, wise being, those miracles by which he derogates from his own laws, is at one blow to annihilate all these qualities: it is an inconsistency that would shame a child. It cannot be supposed that omnipotence has need of miracles to govern the universe, nor to convince his creatures, whose minds and hearts must be in his own hands. The last refuge of the theologian, when driven off all other ground, is the possibility of every thing he asserts, couched in the dogma, "that nothing is impossible to the Divinity." He makes this asseveration with a degree of self-complacency, with an air of triumph, that would almost persuade one he could not be mistaken; most assuredly, with those who dip no further than the surface, he carries complete conviction. But we must take leave to examine a little the nature of this proposition, and we do apprehend that a very slight degree of consideration will shew that it is untenable. In the first place, as we have before observed, the possibility of a thing by no means proves its absolute existence: a thing may be extremely possible, and yet not be. Secondly, if this was once to become an admitted argument, there would be, in fact, an end of all morality and religion. The Bishop of Chester, Doctor John Wilkins, says, "would not such men be generally accounted out of their wits, who could please themselves by entertaining actual hopes of any thing, merely upon account of the possibility of it, or torment themselves with actual fears of all such evils as are possible? Is there any thing imaginable wore wild and extravagant amongst those in bedlam than this would be?" Thirdly, the impossibility would reasonably appear to be on the other side, so far from nothing being impossible, every thing that is erroneous would seem to be actually so; the Divinity could not possibly either love vice, cherish crime, be pleased with depravity, or commit wrong; this decidedly turns the argument against them; they must either admit the most monstrous of all suppositions, or retire from behind the shield with which they have imagined they rendered themselves invulnerable.

To those who may be inclined to inquire, whether it would not be better that all things were operated by a good, wise, intelligent Being, than by a blind nature, in which not one consoling quality is found; by a fatal necessity always inexorable to human intreaty? It may be replied, first, that our interest does not decide the reality of things, and that when this should be even wore advantageous than it is pointed out, it would prove nothing. Secondly, that as we are obliged to admit some things are operated by nature, it is certainly on the side of probability that she performs the others; especially as her capabilities are more substantively proved by every age as it advances. Thirdly, that nature duly studied furnishes every thing necessary to render us as, happy as our essence admits. When, guided by experience, we shall consult her, with cultivated reason; she will discover to us our duties, that is to say, the indispensable means to which her eternal and necessary laws have attached our preservation, our own happiness, and that of society. It is decidedly in her bosom that we shall find wherewith to satisfy our physical wants; whatever is out of nature, can have no existence relatively to ourselves.

Nature, then, is not a step-mother to us; we do not depend upon an inexorable destiny. Let us therefore endeavour to become more familiar with her resources; she will procure us a multitude of benefits when we shall pay her the attention she deserves: when we shall feel disposed to consult her, she will supply us with the requisites to alleviate both our physical and moral evils: she only punishes us with rigour, when, regardless of her admonitions, we plunge into excesses that disgrace us. Has the voluptuary any reason to complain of the sharp pains inflicted by the gout, when experience, if he had but attended to its counsels, has so often warned him, that the grossness of sensual indulgence must inevitably amass in his machine those humours which give birth to the agony he so acutely feels? Has the superstitious bigot any cause for repining at the misery of his uncertain ideas, when an attentive examination of that nature, he holds of such small account, would have convinced him that the idols under whom he trembles, are nothing but personifications of herself, disguised under some other name? It is evidently by incertitude, discord, blindness, delirium, she chastises those who refuse to, acknowledge the justice of her claims.

In the mean time, it cannot be denied, that a pure Theism, or what is called Natural Religion, may not be preferable to superstition, in the same manner as reform has banished many of the abuses of those countries who have embraced it; but there is nothing short of an unlimited and inviolable liberty of thought, that can permanently assure the repose of the mind. The opinions of men are only dangerous when they are restrained, or when it is imagined necessary to make others think as we ourselves think. No opinions, not even those of superstition itself, would be dangerous, if the superstitious did not think themselves obliged to enforce their adoption, or had not the power to persecute those who refused. It is this prejudice, which, for the benefit of mankind, it is essential to annihilate; and if the thing be not achievable, then the next object which philosophy may reasonably propose to itself, will be to make the depositaries of power feel that they never ought to permit their subjects to commit evil for either superstitious or religious opinions. In this case, wars would be almost unheard of amongst men: instead of beholding the melancholy spectacle of man cutting the throat of his fellow man, because this cannot see with his eyes, we shall witness him essentially labouring to his own happiness by promoting that of his neighbour; cultivating the earth in peace; quietly bringing forth the productions of nature, instead of puzzling his brain with theological disputes, which can never be of the smallest advantage, except to the priests. It must be a self-evident truth, that an argument by men, upon that which is not accessible to man, could only have been invented by knaves, who, like the professors of legerdemain, were determined to riot luxuriously on the ignorance and credulity of mankind.

Immanuel Kant – Critique of Pure Reason (Agnostic)

Section III. Of the Arguments employed by Speculative Reason in Proof of the Existence of a Supreme Being

Notwithstanding the pressing necessity which reason feels, to form some presupposition that shall serve the understanding as a proper basis for the complete determination of its conceptions, the idealistic and factitious nature of such a presupposition is too evident to allow reason for a moment to persuade itself into a belief of the objective existence of a mere creation of its own thought. But there are other considerations which compel reason to seek out some resting place in the regress from the conditioned to the unconditioned, which is not given as an actual existence from the mere

conception of it, although it alone can give completeness to the series of conditions. And this is the natural course of every human reason, even of the most uneducated, although the path at first entered it does not always continue to follow. It does not begin from conceptions, but from common experience, and requires a basis in actual existence. But this basis is insecure, unless it rests upon the immovable rock of the absolutely necessary. And this foundation is itself unworthy of trust, if it leave under and above it empty space, if it do not fill all, and leave no room for a why or a wherefore, if it be not, in one word, infinite in its reality.

If we admit the existence of some one thing, whatever it may be, we must also admit that there is something which exists necessarily. For what is contingent exists only under the condition of some other thing, which is its cause; and from this we must go on to conclude the existence of a cause which is not contingent, and which consequently exists necessarily and unconditionally. Such is the argument by which reason justifies its advances towards a primal being.

Now reason looks round for the conception of a being that may be admitted, without inconsistency, to be worthy of the attribute of absolute necessity, not for the purpose of inferring à priori, from the conception of such a being, its objective existence (for if reason allowed itself to take this course, it would not require a basis in given and actual existence, but merely the support of pure conceptions), but for the purpose of discovering, among all our conceptions of possible things, that conception which possesses no element inconsistent with the idea of absolute necessity. For that there must be some absolutely necessary existence, it regards as a truth already established. Now, if it can remove every existence incapable of supporting the attribute of absolute necessity, excepting one—this must be the absolutely necessary being, whether its necessity is comprehensible by us, that is, deducible from the conception of it alone, or not.

Now that, the conception of which contains a therefore to every wherefore, which is not defective in any respect whatever, which is all-sufficient as a condition, seems to be the being of which we can justly predicate absolute necessity—for this reason, that, possessing the conditions of all that is possible, it does not and cannot itself require any condition. And thus it satisfies, in one respect at least, the requirements of the conception of absolute necessity. In this view, it is superior to all other conceptions, which, as deficient and incomplete, do not possess the characteristic of independence of all higher conditions. It is true that we cannot infer from this that what does not contain in itself the supreme and complete condition—the condition of all other things—must possess only a conditioned existence; but as little can we assert the contrary, for this supposed being does not possess the only characteristic which can enable reason to cognize by means of an à priori conception the unconditioned and necessary nature of its existence.

The conception of an ens realissimum is that which best agrees with the conception of an unconditioned and necessary being. The former conception does not satisfy all the requirements of the latter; but we have no choice, we are obliged to adhere to it, for we find that we cannot do without the existence of a necessary being; and even although we admit it, we find it out of our power to discover in the whole sphere of possibility any being that can advance well-grounded claims to such a distinction.

The following is, therefore, the natural course of human reason. It begins by persuading itself of the existence of some necessary being. In this being it recognizes the characteristics of unconditioned existence. It then seeks the conception of that which is independent of all conditions, and finds it in that which is itself the sufficient condition of all other things—in other words, in that which contains all reality. But the unlimited all is an absolute unity, and is conceived by the mind as a being one and supreme; and thus reason concludes that the Supreme Being, as the primal basis of all things, possesses an existence which is absolutely necessary.

This conception must be regarded as in some degree satisfactory, if we admit the existence of a necessary being, and consider that there exists a necessity for a definite and final answer to these questions. In such a case, we cannot make a better choice, or rather we have no choice at all, but feel ourselves obliged to declare in favour of the absolute unity of complete reality, as the highest source of the possibility of things. But if there exists no motive for coming to a definite conclusion, and we may leave the question unanswered till we have fully weighed both sides—in other words, when we are merely called upon to decide how much we happen to know about the question, and how much we merely flatter ourselves that we know—the above conclusion does not appear to be so great advantage, but, on the contrary, seems defective in the grounds upon which it is supported.

For, admitting the truth of all that has been said, that, namely, the inference from a given existence (my own, for example) to the existence of an unconditioned and necessary being is valid and unassailable; that, in the second place, we must consider a being which contains all reality, and consequently all the conditions of other things, to be absolutely unconditioned; and admitting too, that we have thus discovered the conception of a thing to which may be attributed, without inconsistency, absolute necessity—it does not follow from all this that the conception of a limited being, in which the supreme reality does not reside, is therefore incompatible with the idea of absolute necessity. For, although I do not discover the element of the unconditioned in the conception of such a being—an element which is manifestly existent in the sum-total of all conditions—I am not entitled to conclude that its existence is therefore conditioned; just as I am not entitled to affirm, in a hypothetical syllogism, that where a certain condition does not exist (in the present, completeness, as far as pure conceptions are concerned), the conditioned does not exist either. On the contrary, we are free to consider all limited beings as likewise unconditionally necessary, although we are unable to infer this from the general conception which we have of them. Thus conducted, this argument is incapable of giving us the least notion of the properties of a necessary being, and must be in every respect without result.

This argument continues, however, to possess a weight and an authority, which, in spite of its objective insufficiency, it has never been divested of. For, granting that certain responsibilities lie upon us, which, as based on the ideas of reason, deserve to be respected and submitted to, although they are incapable of a real or practical application to our nature, or, in other words, would be responsibilities without motives, except upon the supposition of a Supreme Being to give effect and influence to the practical laws: in such a case we should be bound to obey our conceptions, which, although objectively insufficient, do, according to the standard of reason, preponderate over and are superior to any claims that may be advanced from any other quarter. The equilibrium of doubt would in this case be destroyed by a practical addition; indeed, Reason would be compelled

to condemn herself, if she refused to comply with the demands of the judgement, no superior to which we know—however defective her understanding of the grounds of these demands might be.

This argument, although in fact transcendental, inasmuch as it rests upon the intrinsic insufficiency of the contingent, is so simple and natural, that the commonest understanding can appreciate its value. We see things around us change, arise, and pass away; they, or their condition, must therefore have a cause. The same demand must again be made of the cause itself—as a datum of experience. Now it is natural that we should place the highest causality just where we place supreme causality, in that being, which contains the conditions of all possible effects, and the conception of which is so simple as that of an all-embracing reality. This highest cause, then, we regard as absolutely necessary, because we find it absolutely necessary to rise to it, and do not discover any reason for proceeding beyond it. Thus, among all nations, through the darkest polytheism glimmer some faint sparks of monotheism, to which these idolaters have been led, not from reflection and profound thought, but by the study and natural progress of the common understanding.

There are only three modes of proving the existence of a Deity, on the grounds of speculative reason.

All the paths conducting to this end begin either from determinate experience and the peculiar constitution of the world of sense, and rise, according to the laws of causality, from it to the highest cause existing apart from the world—or from a purely indeterminate experience, that is, some empirical existence—or abstraction is made of all experience, and the existence of a supreme cause is concluded from à priori conceptions alone. The first is the physico-theological argument, the second the cosmological, the third the ontological. More there are not, and more there cannot be.

I shall show it is as unsuccessful on the one path—the empirical—as on the other—the transcendental, and that it stretches its wings in vain, to soar beyond the world of sense by the mere might of speculative thought. As regards the order in which we must discuss those arguments, it will be exactly the reverse of that in which reason, in the progress of its development, attains to them—the order in which they are placed above. For it will be made manifest to the reader that, although experience presents the occasion and the starting-point, it is the transcendental idea of reason which guides it in its pilgrimage and is the goal of all its struggles. I shall therefore begin with an examination of the transcendental argument, and afterwards inquire what additional strength has accrued to this mode of proof from the addition of the empirical element.

Section IV. Of the Impossibility of an Ontological Proof of the Existence of God

It is evident from what has been said that the conception of an absolutely necessary being is a mere idea, the objective reality of which is far from being established by the mere fact that it is a need of reason. On the contrary, this idea serves merely to indicate a certain unattainable perfection, and rather limits the operations than, by the presentation of new objects, extends the sphere of the understanding. But a strange anomaly meets us at the very threshold; for the inference from a given existence in general to an absolutely necessary existence seems to be correct and unavoidable, while the conditions of the understanding refuse to aid us in forming any conception of such a being.

Philosophers have always talked of an absolutely necessary being, and have nevertheless declined to take the trouble of conceiving whether—and how—a being of this nature is even cogitable, not to mention that its existence is actually demonstrable. A verbal definition of the conception is certainly easy enough: it is something the non-existence of which is impossible. But does this definition throw any light upon the conditions which render it impossible to cogitate the non-existence of a thing—conditions which we wish to ascertain, that we may discover whether we think anything in the conception of such a being or not? For the mere fact that I throw away, by means of the word unconditioned, all the conditions which the understanding habitually requires in order to regard anything as necessary, is very far from making clear whether by means of the conception of the unconditionally necessary I think of something, or really of nothing at all.

Nay, more, this chance-conception, now become so current, many have endeavoured to explain by examples which seemed to render any inquiries regarding its intelligibility quite needless. Every geometrical proposition—a triangle has three angles—it was said, is absolutely necessary; and thus people talked of an object which lay out of the sphere of our understanding as if it were perfectly plain what the conception of such a being meant.

All the examples adduced have been drawn, without exception, from judgements, and not from things. But the unconditioned necessity of a judgement does not form the absolute necessity of a thing. On the contrary, the absolute necessity of a judgement is only a conditioned necessity of a thing, or of the predicate in a judgement. The proposition above-mentioned does not enounce that three angles necessarily exist, but, upon condition that a triangle exists, three angles must necessarily exist—in it. And thus this logical necessity has been the source of the greatest delusions. Having formed an à priori conception of a thing, the content of which was made to embrace existence, we believed ourselves safe in concluding that, because existence belongs necessarily to the object of the conception (that is, under the condition of my positing this thing as given), the existence of the thing is also posited necessarily, and that it is therefore absolutely necessary—merely because its existence has been cogitated in the conception.

If, in an identical judgement, I annihilate the predicate in thought, and retain the subject, a contradiction is the result; and hence I say, the former belongs necessarily to the latter. But if I suppress both subject and predicate in thought, no contradiction arises; for there is nothing at all, and therefore no means of forming a contradiction. To suppose the existence of a triangle and not that of its three angles, is self-contradictory; but to suppose the non-existence of both triangle and angles is perfectly admissible. And so is it with the conception of an absolutely necessary being. Annihilate its existence in thought, and you annihilate the thing itself with all its predicates; how then can there be any room for contradiction? Externally, there is nothing to give rise to a contradiction, for a thing cannot be necessary externally; nor internally, for, by the annihilation or suppression of the thing itself, its internal properties are also annihilated. God is omnipotent—that is a necessary judgement. His omnipotence cannot be denied, if the existence of a Deity is posited—the existence, that is, of an infinite being, the two conceptions being identical. But when you say, God does not exist, neither omnipotence nor any other predicate is affirmed; they must all disappear with the subject, and in this judgement there cannot exist the least self-contradiction.

You have thus seen that when the predicate of a judgement is annihilated in thought along with the subject, no internal contradiction can arise, be the predicate what it may. There is no possibility of evading the conclusion—you find yourselves compelled to declare: There are certain subjects which cannot be annihilated in thought. But this is nothing more than saying: There exist subjects which are absolutely necessary—the very hypothesis which you are called upon to establish. For I find myself unable to form the slightest conception of a thing which when annihilated in thought with all its predicates, leaves behind a contradiction; and contradiction is the only criterion of impossibility in the sphere of pure à priori conceptions.

Against these general considerations, the justice of which no one can dispute, one argument is adduced, which is regarded as furnishing a satisfactory demonstration from the fact. It is affirmed that there is one and only one conception, in which the non-being or annihilation of the object is self-contradictory, and this is the conception of an ens realissimum. It possesses, you say, all reality, and you feel yourselves justified in admitting the possibility of such a being. (This I am willing to grant for the present, although the existence of a conception which is not self-contradictory is far from being sufficient to prove the possibility of an object.)[67] Now the notion of all reality embraces in it that of existence; the notion of existence lies, therefore, in the conception of this possible thing. If this thing is annihilated in thought, the internal possibility of the thing is also annihilated, which is self-contradictory.

A conception is always possible, if it is not self-contradictory. This is the logical criterion of possibility, distinguishing the object of such a conception from the nihil negativum. But it may be, notwithstanding, an empty conception, unless the objective reality of this synthesis, but which it is generated, is demonstrated; and a proof of this kind must be based upon principles of possible experience, and not upon the principle of analysis or contradiction. This remark may be serviceable as a warning against concluding, from the possibility of a conception—which is logical—the possibility of a thing—which is real.

I answer: It is absurd to introduce—under whatever term disguised—into the conception of a thing, which is to be cogitated solely in reference to its possibility, the conception of its existence. If this is admitted, you will have apparently gained the day, but in reality have enounced nothing but a mere tautology. I ask, is the proposition, this or that thing (which I am admitting to be possible) exists, an analytical or a synthetical proposition? If the former, there is no addition made to the subject of your thought by the affirmation of its existence; but then the conception in your minds is identical with the thing itself, or you have supposed the existence of a thing to be possible, and then inferred its existence from its internal possibility—which is but a miserable tautology. The word reality in the conception of the thing, and the word existence in the conception of the predicate, will not help you out of the difficulty. For, supposing you were to term all positing of a thing reality, you have thereby posited the thing with all its predicates in the conception of the subject and assumed its actual existence, and this you merely repeat in the predicate. But if you confess, as every reasonable person must, that every existential proposition is synthetical, how can it be maintained that the predicate of existence cannot be denied without contradiction?—a property which is the characteristic of analytical propositions, alone.

I should have a reasonable hope of putting an end for ever to this sophistical mode of argumentation, by a strict definition of the conception of existence, did not my own experience teach me that the illusion arising from our confounding a logical with a real predicate (a predicate which aids in the determination of a thing) resists almost all the endeavours of explanation and illustration. A logical predicate may be what you please, even the subject may be predicated of itself; for logic pays no regard to the content of a judgement. But the determination of a conception is a predicate, which adds to and enlarges the conception. It must not, therefore, be contained in the conception.

Being is evidently not a real predicate, that is, a conception of something which is added to the conception of some other thing. It is merely the positing of a thing, or of certain determinations in it. Logically, it is merely the copula of a judgement. The proposition, God is omnipotent, contains two conceptions, which have a certain object or content; the word is, is no additional predicate—it merely indicates the relation of the predicate to the subject. Now, if I take the subject (God) with all its predicates (omnipotence being one), and say: God is, or, There is a God, I add no new predicate to the conception of God, I merely posit or affirm the existence of the subject with all its predicates—I posit the object in relation to my conception. The content of both is the same; and there is no addition made to the conception, which expresses merely the possibility of the object, by my cogitating the object—in the expression, it is—as absolutely given or existing. Thus the real contains no more than the possible. A hundred real dollars contain no more than a hundred possible dollars. For, as the latter indicate the conception, and the former the object, on the supposition that the content of the former was greater than that of the latter, my conception would not be an expression of the whole object, and would consequently be an inadequate conception of it. But in reckoning my wealth there may be said to be more in a hundred real dollars than in a hundred possible dollars—that is, in the mere conception of them. For the real object—the dollars—is not analytically contained in my conception, but forms a synthetical addition to my conception (which is merely a determination of my mental state), although this objective reality—this existence—apart from my conceptions, does not in the least degree increase the aforesaid hundred dollars.

By whatever and by whatever number of predicates—even to the complete determination of it—I may cogitate a thing, I do not in the least augment the object of my conception by the addition of the statement: This thing exists. Otherwise, not exactly the same, but something more than what was cogitated in my conception, would exist, and I could not affirm that the exact object of my conception had real existence. If I cogitate a thing as containing all modes of reality except one, the mode of reality which is absent is not added to the conception of the thing by the affirmation that the thing exists; on the contrary, the thing exists—if it exist at all—with the same defect as that cogitated in its conception; otherwise not that which was cogitated, but something different, exists. Now, if I cogitate a being as the highest reality, without defect or imperfection, the question still remains—whether this being exists or not? For, although no element is wanting in the possible real content of my conception, there is a defect in its relation to my mental state, that is, I am ignorant whether the cognition of the object indicated by the conception is possible à posteriori. And here the cause of the present difficulty becomes apparent. If the question regarded an object of sense merely, it would be impossible for me to confound the conception with the existence of a thing. For the conception merely enables me to cogitate an object as according with the general

conditions of experience; while the existence of the object permits me to cogitate it as contained in the sphere of actual experience. At the same time, this connection with the world of experience does not in the least augment the conception, although a possible perception has been added to the experience of the mind. But if we cogitate existence by the pure category alone, it is not to be wondered at, that we should find ourselves unable to present any criterion sufficient to distinguish it from mere possibility.

Whatever be the content of our conception of an object, it is necessary to go beyond it, if we wish to predicate existence of the object. In the case of sensuous objects, this is attained by their connection according to empirical laws with some one of my perceptions; but there is no means of cognizing the existence of objects of pure thought, because it must be cognized completely à priori. But all our knowledge of existence (be it immediately by perception, or by inferences connecting some object with a perception) belongs entirely to the sphere of experience—which is in perfect unity with itself; and although an existence out of this sphere cannot be absolutely declared to be impossible, it is a hypothesis the truth of which we have no means of ascertaining.

The notion of a Supreme Being is in many respects a highly useful idea; but for the very reason that it is an idea, it is incapable of enlarging our cognition with regard to the existence of things. It is not even sufficient to instruct us as to the possibility of a being which we do not know to exist. The analytical criterion of possibility, which consists in the absence of contradiction in propositions, cannot be denied it. But the connection of real properties in a thing is a synthesis of the possibility of which an à priori judgement cannot be formed, because these realities are not presented to us specifically; and even if this were to happen, a judgement would still be impossible, because the criterion of the possibility of synthetical cognitions must be sought for in the world of experience, to which the object of an idea cannot belong. And thus the celebrated Leibnitz has utterly failed in his attempt to establish upon à priori grounds the possibility of this sublime ideal being.

The celebrated ontological or Cartesian argument for the existence of a Supreme Being is therefore insufficient; and we may as well hope to increase our stock of knowledge by the aid of mere ideas, as the merchant to augment his wealth by the addition of noughts to his cash account.

Section V. Of the Impossibility of a Cosmological Proof of the Existence of God

It was by no means a natural course of proceeding, but, on the contrary, an invention entirely due to the subtlety of the schools, to attempt to draw from a mere idea a proof of the existence of an object corresponding to it. Such a course would never have been pursued, were it not for that need of reason which requires it to suppose the existence of a necessary being as a basis for the empirical regress, and that, as this necessity must be unconditioned and à priori, reason is bound to discover a conception which shall satisfy, if possible, this requirement, and enable us to attain to the à priori cognition of such a being. This conception was thought to be found in the idea of an ens realissimum, and thus this idea was employed for the attainment of a better defined knowledge of a necessary being, of the existence of which we were convinced, or persuaded, on other grounds. Thus reason was seduced from her natural courage; and, instead of concluding with the conception of an ens realissimum, an attempt was made to begin with it, for the purpose of inferring from it

that idea of a necessary existence which it was in fact called in to complete. Thus arose that unfortunate ontological argument, which neither satisfies the healthy common sense of humanity, nor sustains the scientific examination of the philosopher.

The cosmological proof, which we are about to examine, retains the connection between absolute necessity and the highest reality; but, instead of reasoning from this highest reality to a necessary existence, like the preceding argument, it concludes from the given unconditioned necessity of some being its unlimited reality. The track it pursues, whether rational or sophistical, is at least natural, and not only goes far to persuade the common understanding, but shows itself deserving of respect from the speculative intellect; while it contains, at the same time, the outlines of all the arguments employed in natural theology—arguments which always have been, and still will be, in use and authority. These, however adorned, and hid under whatever embellishments of rhetoric and sentiment, are at bottom identical with the arguments we are at present to discuss. This proof, termed by Leibnitz the argumentum a contingentia mundi, I shall now lay before the reader, and subject to a strict examination.

It is framed in the following manner: If something exists, an absolutely necessary being must likewise exist. Now I, at least, exist. Consequently, there exists an absolutely necessary being. The minor contains an experience, the major reasons from a general experience to the existence of a necessary being. Thus this argument really begins at experience, and is not completely à priori, or ontological. The object of all possible experience being the world, it is called the cosmological proof. It contains no reference to any peculiar property of sensuous objects, by which this world of sense might be distinguished from other possible worlds; and in this respect it differs from the physico-theological proof, which is based upon the consideration of the peculiar constitution of our sensuous world.

This inference is too well known to require more detailed discussion. It is based upon the spurious transcendental law of causality, that everything which is contingent has a cause, which, if itself contingent, must also have a cause; and so on, till the series of subordinated causes must end with an absolutely necessary cause, without which it would not possess completeness.

The proof proceeds thus: A necessary being can be determined only in one way, that is, it can be determined by only one of all possible opposed predicates; consequently, it must be completely determined in and by its conception. But there is only a single conception of a thing possible, which completely determines the thing à priori: that is, the conception of the ens realissimum. It follows that the conception of the ens realissimum is the only conception by and in which we can cogitate a necessary being. Consequently, a Supreme Being necessarily exists.

In this cosmological argument are assembled so many sophistical propositions that speculative reason seems to have exerted in it all her dialectical skill to produce a transcendental illusion of the most extreme character. We shall postpone an investigation of this argument for the present, and confine ourselves to exposing the stratagem by which it imposes upon us an old argument in a new dress, and appeals to the agreement of two witnesses, the one with the credentials of pure reason, and the other with those of empiricism; while, in fact, it is only the former who has changed his dress and voice, for the purpose of passing himself off for an additional witness. That it may

possess a secure foundation, it bases its conclusions upon experience, and thus appears to be completely distinct from the ontological argument, which places its confidence entirely in pure à priori conceptions. But this experience merely aids reason in making one step—to the existence of a necessary being. What the properties of this being are cannot be learned from experience; and therefore reason abandons it altogether, and pursues its inquiries in the sphere of pure conception, for the purpose of discovering what the properties of an absolutely necessary being ought to be, that is, what among all possible things contain the conditions (requisita) of absolute necessity. Reason believes that it has discovered these requisites in the conception of an ens realissimum—and in it alone, and hence concludes: The ens realissimum is an absolutely necessary being. But it is evident that reason has here presupposed that the conception of an ens realissimum is perfectly adequate to the conception of a being of absolute necessity, that is, that we may infer the existence of the latter from that of the former—a proposition which formed the basis of the ontological argument, and which is now employed in the support of the cosmological argument, contrary to the wish and professions of its inventors. For the existence of an absolutely necessary being is given in conceptions alone. But if I say: "The conception of the ens realissimum is a conception of this kind, and in fact the only conception which is adequate to our idea of a necessary being," I am obliged to admit, that the latter may be inferred from the former. Thus it is properly the ontological argument which figures in the cosmological, and constitutes the whole strength of the latter; while the spurious basis of experience has been of no further use than to conduct us to the conception of absolute necessity, being utterly insufficient to demonstrate the presence of this attribute in any determinate existence or thing. For when we propose to ourselves an aim of this character, we must abandon the sphere of experience, and rise to that of pure conceptions, which we examine with the purpose of discovering whether any one contains the conditions of the possibility of an absolutely necessary being. But if the possibility of such a being is thus demonstrated, its existence is also proved; for we may then assert that, of all possible beings there is one which possesses the attribute of necessity—in other words, this being possesses an absolutely necessary existence.

All illusions in an argument are more easily detected when they are presented in the formal manner employed by the schools, which we now proceed to do.

If the proposition: "Every absolutely necessary being is likewise an ens realissimum," is correct (and it is this which constitutes the nervus probandi of the cosmological argument), it must, like all affirmative judgements, be capable of conversion—the conversio per accidens, at least. It follows, then, that some entia realissima are absolutely necessary beings. But no ens realissimum is in any respect different from another, and what is valid of some is valid of all. In this present case, therefore, I may employ simple conversion, and say: "Every ens realissimum is a necessary being." But as this proposition is determined à priori by the conceptions contained in it, the mere conception of an ens realissimum must possess the additional attribute of absolute necessity. But this is exactly what was maintained in the ontological argument, and not recognized by the cosmological, although it formed the real ground of its disguised and illusory reasoning.

Thus the second mode employed by speculative reason of demonstrating the existence of a Supreme Being, is not only, like the first, illusory and inadequate, but possesses the additional

blemish of an ignoratio elenchi—professing to conduct us by a new road to the desired goal, but bringing us back, after a short circuit, to the old path which we had deserted at its call.

I mentioned above that this cosmological argument contains a perfect nest of dialectical assumptions, which transcendental criticism does not find it difficult to expose and to dissipate. I shall merely enumerate these, leaving it to the reader, who must by this time be well practised in such matters, to investigate the fallacies residing therein.

The following fallacies, for example, are discoverable in this mode of proof: 1. The transcendental principle: "Everything that is contingent must have a cause"—a principle without significance, except in the sensuous world. For the purely intellectual conception of the contingent cannot produce any synthetical proposition, like that of causality, which is itself without significance or distinguishing characteristic except in the phenomenal world. But in the present case it is employed to help us beyond the limits of its sphere. 2. "From the impossibility of an infinite ascending series of causes in the world of sense a first cause is inferred"; a conclusion which the principles of the employment of reason do not justify even in the sphere of experience, and still less when an attempt is made to pass the limits of this sphere. 3. Reason allows itself to be satisfied upon insufficient grounds, with regard to the completion of this series. It removes all conditions (without which, however, no conception of Necessity can take place); and, as after this it is beyond our power to form any other conceptions, it accepts this as a completion of the conception it wishes to form of the series. 4. The logical possibility of a conception of the total of reality (the criterion of this possibility being the absence of contradiction) is confounded with the transcendental, which requires a principle of the practicability of such a synthesis—a principle which again refers us to the world of experience. And so on.

The aim of the cosmological argument is to avoid the necessity of proving the existence of a necessary being priori from mere conceptions—a proof which must be ontological, and of which we feel ourselves quite incapable. With this purpose, we reason from an actual existence—an experience in general, to an absolutely necessary condition of that existence. It is in this case unnecessary to demonstrate its possibility. For after having proved that it exists, the question regarding its possibility is superfluous. Now, when we wish to define more strictly the nature of this necessary being, we do not look out for some being the conception of which would enable us to comprehend the necessity of its being—for if we could do this, an empirical presupposition would be unnecessary; no, we try to discover merely the negative condition (conditio sine qua non), without which a being would not be absolutely necessary. Now this would be perfectly admissible in every sort of reasoning, from a consequence to its principle; but in the present case it unfortunately happens that the condition of absolute necessity can be discovered in but a single being, the conception of which must consequently contain all that is requisite for demonstrating the presence of absolute necessity, and thus entitle me to infer this absolute necessity à priori. That is, it must be possible to reason conversely, and say: The thing, to which the conception of the highest reality belongs, is absolutely necessary. But if I cannot reason thus—and I cannot, unless I believe in the sufficiency of the ontological argument—I find insurmountable obstacles in my new path, and am really no farther than the point from which I set out. The conception of a Supreme Being satisfies all questions à priori regarding the internal determinations of a thing, and is for this

reason an ideal without equal or parallel, the general conception of it indicating it as at the same time an ens individuum among all possible things. But the conception does not satisfy the question regarding its existence—which was the purpose of all our inquiries; and, although the existence of a necessary being were admitted, we should find it impossible to answer the question: What of all things in the world must be regarded as such?

It is certainly allowable to admit the existence of an all-sufficient being—a cause of all possible effects—for the purpose of enabling reason to introduce unity into its mode and grounds of explanation with regard to phenomena. But to assert that such a being necessarily exists, is no longer the modest enunciation of an admissible hypothesis, but the boldest declaration of an apodeictic certainty; for the cognition of that which is absolutely necessary must itself possess that character.

The aim of the transcendental ideal formed by the mind is either to discover a conception which shall harmonize with the idea of absolute necessity, or a conception which shall contain that idea. If the one is possible, so is the other; for reason recognizes that alone as absolutely necessary which is necessary from its conception. But both attempts are equally beyond our power—we find it impossible to satisfy the understanding upon this point, and as impossible to induce it to remain at rest in relation to this incapacity.

Unconditioned necessity, which, as the ultimate support and stay of all existing things, is an indispensable requirement of the mind, is an abyss on the verge of which human reason trembles in dismay. Even the idea of eternity, terrible and sublime as it is, as depicted by Haller, does not produce upon the mental vision such a feeling of awe and terror; for, although it measures the duration of things, it does not support them. We cannot bear, nor can we rid ourselves of the thought that a being, which we regard as the greatest of all possible existences, should say to himself: I am from eternity to eternity; beside me there is nothing, except that which exists by my will; whence then am I? Here all sinks away from under us; and the greatest, as the smallest, perfection, hovers without stay or footing in presence of the speculative reason, which finds it as easy to part with the one as with the other.

Many physical powers, which evidence their existence by their effects, are perfectly inscrutable in their nature; they elude all our powers of observation. The transcendental object which forms the basis of phenomena, and, in connection with it, the reason why our sensibility possesses this rather than that particular kind of conditions, are and must ever remain hidden from our mental vision; the fact is there, the reason of the fact we cannot see. But an ideal of pure reason cannot be termed mysterious or inscrutable, because the only credential of its reality is the need of it felt by reason, for the purpose of giving completeness to the world of synthetical unity. An ideal is not even given as a cogitable object, and therefore cannot be inscrutable; on the contrary, it must, as a mere idea, be based on the constitution of reason itself, and on this account must be capable of explanation and solution. For the very essence of reason consists in its ability to give an account, of all our conceptions, opinions, and assertions—upon objective, or, when they happen to be illusory and fallacious, upon subjective grounds.

Detection and Explanation of the Dialectical Illusion in all Transcendental Arguments for the Existence of a Necessary Being.

Both of the above arguments are transcendental; in other words, they do not proceed upon empirical principles. For, although the cosmological argument professed to lay a basis of experience for its edifice of reasoning, it did not ground its procedure upon the peculiar constitution of experience, but upon pure principles of reason—in relation to an existence given by empirical consciousness; utterly abandoning its guidance, however, for the purpose of supporting its assertions entirely upon pure conceptions. Now what is the cause, in these transcendental arguments, of the dialectical, but natural, illusion, which connects the conceptions of necessity and supreme reality, and hypostatizes that which cannot be anything but an idea? What is the cause of this unavoidable step on the part of reason, of admitting that some one among all existing things must be necessary, while it falls back from the assertion of the existence of such a being as from an abyss? And how does reason proceed to explain this anomaly to itself, and from the wavering condition of a timid and reluctant approbation—always again withdrawn—arrive at a calm and settled insight into its cause?

It is something very remarkable that, on the supposition that something exists, I cannot avoid the inference that something exists necessarily. Upon this perfectly natural—but not on that account reliable—inference does the cosmological argument rest. But, let me form any conception whatever of a thing, I find that I cannot cogitate the existence of the thing as absolutely necessary, and that nothing prevents me—be the thing or being what it may—from cogitating its non-existence. I may thus be obliged to admit that all existing things have a necessary basis, while I cannot cogitate any single or individual thing as necessary. In other words, I can never complete the regress through the conditions of existence, without admitting the existence of a necessary being; but, on the other hand, I cannot make a commencement from this being.

If I must cogitate something as existing necessarily as the basis of existing things, and yet am not permitted to cogitate any individual thing as in itself necessary, the inevitable inference is that necessity and contingency are not properties of things themselves—otherwise an internal contradiction would result; that consequently neither of these principles are objective, but merely subjective principles of reason—the one requiring us to seek for a necessary ground for everything that exists, that is, to be satisfied with no other explanation than that which is complete à priori, the other forbidding us ever to hope for the attainment of this completeness, that is, to regard no member of the empirical world as unconditioned. In this mode of viewing them, both principles, in their purely heuristic and regulative character, and as concerning merely the formal interest of reason, are quite consistent with each other. The one says: “You must philosophize upon nature,” as if there existed a necessary primal basis of all existing things, solely for the purpose of introducing systematic unity into your knowledge, by pursuing an idea of this character—a foundation which is arbitrarily admitted to be ultimate; while the other warns you to consider no individual determination, concerning the existence of things, as such an ultimate foundation, that is, as absolutely necessary, but to keep the way always open for further progress in the deduction, and to treat every determination as determined by some other. But if all that we perceive must be

regarded as conditionally necessary, it is impossible that anything which is empirically given should be absolutely necessary.

It follows from this that you must accept the absolutely necessary as out of and beyond the world, inasmuch as it is useful only as a principle of the highest possible unity in experience, and you cannot discover any such necessary existence in the would, the second rule requiring you to regard all empirical causes of unity as themselves deduced.

The philosophers of antiquity regarded all the forms of nature as contingent; while matter was considered by them, in accordance with the judgement of the common reason of mankind, as primal and necessary. But if they had regarded matter, not relatively—as the substratum of phenomena, but absolutely and in itself—as an independent existence, this idea of absolute necessity would have immediately disappeared. For there is nothing absolutely connecting reason with such an existence; on the contrary, it can annihilate it in thought, always and without self-contradiction. But in thought alone lay the idea of absolute necessity. A regulative principle must, therefore, have been at the foundation of this opinion. In fact, extension and impenetrability—which together constitute our conception of matter—form the supreme empirical principle of the unity of phenomena, and this principle, in so far as it is empirically unconditioned, possesses the property of a regulative principle. But, as every determination of matter which constitutes what is real in it—and consequently impenetrability—is an effect, which must have a cause, and is for this reason always derived, the notion of matter cannot harmonize with the idea of a necessary being, in its character of the principle of all derived unity. For every one of its real properties, being derived, must be only conditionally necessary, and can therefore be annihilated in thought; and thus the whole existence of matter can be so annihilated or suppressed. If this were not the case, we should have found in the world of phenomena the highest ground or condition of unity—which is impossible, according to the second regulative principle. It follows that matter, and, in general, all that forms part of the world of sense, cannot be a necessary primal being, nor even a principle of empirical unity, but that this being or principle must have its place assigned without the world. And, in this way, we can proceed in perfect confidence to deduce the phenomena of the world and their existence from other phenomena, just as if there existed no necessary being; and we can at the same time, strive without ceasing towards the attainment of completeness for our deduction, just as if such a being—the supreme condition of all existences—were presupposed by the mind.

These remarks will have made it evident to the reader that the ideal of the Supreme Being, far from being an enouncement of the existence of a being in itself necessary, is nothing more than a regulative principle of reason, requiring us to regard all connection existing between phenomena as if it had its origin from an all-sufficient necessary cause, and basing upon this the rule of a systematic and necessary unity in the explanation of phenomena. We cannot, at the same time, avoid regarding, by a transcendental subreptio, this formal principle as constitutive, and hypostatizing this unity. Precisely similar is the case with our notion of space. Space is the primal condition of all forms, which are properly just so many different limitations of it; and thus, although it is merely a principle of sensibility, we cannot help regarding it as an absolutely necessary and self-subsistent thing—as an object given à priori in itself. In the same way, it is quite natural that, as the systematic unity of nature cannot be established as a principle for the empirical

employment of reason, unless it is based upon the idea of an ens realissimum, as the supreme cause, we should regard this idea as a real object, and this object, in its character of supreme condition, as absolutely necessary, and that in this way a regulative should be transformed into a constitutive principle. This interchange becomes evident when I regard this supreme being, which, relatively to the world, was absolutely (unconditionally) necessary, as a thing per se. In this case, I find it impossible to represent this necessity in or by any conception, and it exists merely in my own mind, as the formal condition of thought, but not as a material and hypostatic condition of existence.

Section VI. Of the Impossibility of a Physico-Theological Proof

If, then, neither a pure conception nor the general experience of an existing being can provide a sufficient basis for the proof of the existence of the Deity, we can make the attempt by the only other mode—that of grounding our argument upon a determinate experience of the phenomena of the present world, their constitution and disposition, and discover whether we can thus attain to a sound conviction of the existence of a Supreme Being. This argument we shall term the physico-theological argument. If it is shown to be insufficient, speculative reason cannot present us with any satisfactory proof of the existence of a being corresponding to our transcendental idea.

It is evident from the remarks that have been made in the preceding sections, that an answer to this question will be far from being difficult or unconvincing. For how can any experience be adequate with an idea? The very essence of an idea consists in the fact that no experience can ever be discovered congruent or adequate with it. The transcendental idea of a necessary and all-sufficient being is so immeasurably great, so high above all that is empirical, which is always conditioned, that we hope in vain to find materials in the sphere of experience sufficiently ample for our conception, and in vain seek the unconditioned among things that are conditioned, while examples, nay, even guidance is denied us by the laws of empirical synthesis.

If the Supreme Being forms a link in the chain of empirical conditions, it must be a member of the empirical series, and, like the lower members which it precedes, have its origin in some higher member of the series. If, on the other hand, we disengage it from the chain, and cogitate it as an intelligible being, apart from the series of natural causes—how shall reason bridge the abyss that separates the latter from the former? All laws respecting the regress from effects to causes, all synthetical additions to our knowledge relate solely to possible experience and the objects of the sensuous world, and, apart from them, are without significance.

The world around us opens before our view so magnificent a spectacle of order, variety, beauty, and conformity to ends, that whether we pursue our observations into the infinity of space in the one direction, or into its illimitable divisions in the other, whether we regard the world in its greatest or its least manifestations—even after we have attained to the highest summit of knowledge which our weak minds can reach, we find that language in the presence of wonders so inconceivable has lost its force, and number its power to reckon, nay, even thought fails to conceive adequately, and our conception of the whole dissolves into an astonishment without power of expression—all the more eloquent that it is dumb. Everywhere around us we observe a chain of causes and effects, of means and ends, of death and birth; and, as nothing has entered of itself into

the condition in which we find it, we are constantly referred to some other thing, which itself suggests the same inquiry regarding its cause, and thus the universe must sink into the abyss of nothingness, unless we admit that, besides this infinite chain of contingencies, there exists something that is primal and self-subsistent—something which, as the cause of this phenomenal world, secures its continuance and preservation.

This highest cause—what magnitude shall we attribute to it? Of the content of the world we are ignorant; still less can we estimate its magnitude by comparison with the sphere of the possible. But this supreme cause being a necessity of the human mind, what is there to prevent us from attributing to it such a degree of perfection as to place it above the sphere of all that is possible? This we can easily do, although only by the aid of the faint outline of an abstract conception, by representing this being to ourselves as containing in itself, as an individual substance, all possible perfection—a conception which satisfies that requirement of reason which demands parsimony in principles, which is free from self-contradiction, which even contributes to the extension of the employment of reason in experience, by means of the guidance afforded by this idea to order and system, and which in no respect conflicts with any law of experience.

This argument always deserves to be mentioned with respect. It is the oldest, the clearest, and that most in conformity with the common reason of humanity. It animates the study of nature, as it itself derives its existence and draws ever new strength from that source. It introduces aims and ends into a sphere in which our observation could not of itself have discovered them, and extends our knowledge of nature, by directing our attention to a unity, the principle of which lies beyond nature. This knowledge of nature again reacts upon this idea—its cause; and thus our belief in a divine author of the universe rises to the power of an irresistible conviction.

For these reasons it would be utterly hopeless to attempt to rob this argument of the authority it has always enjoyed. The mind, unceasingly elevated by these considerations, which, although empirical, are so remarkably powerful, and continually adding to their force, will not suffer itself to be depressed by the doubts suggested by subtle speculation; it tears itself out of this state of uncertainty, the moment it casts a look upon the wondrous forms of nature and the majesty of the universe, and rises from height to height, from condition to condition, till it has elevated itself to the supreme and unconditioned author of all.

But although we have nothing to object to the reasonableness and utility of this procedure, but have rather to commend and encourage it, we cannot approve of the claims which this argument advances to demonstrative certainty and to a reception upon its own merits, apart from favour or support by other arguments. Nor can it injure the cause of morality to endeavour to lower the tone of the arrogant sophist, and to teach him that modesty and moderation which are the properties of a belief that brings calm and content into the mind, without prescribing to it an unworthy subjection. I maintain, then, that the physico-theological argument is insufficient of itself to prove the existence of a Supreme Being, that it must entrust this to the ontological argument—to which it serves merely as an introduction, and that, consequently, this argument contains the only possible ground of proof (possessed by speculative reason) for the existence of this being.

The chief momenta in the physico-theological argument are as follow: 1. We observe in the world manifest signs of an arrangement full of purpose, executed with great wisdom, and argument in whole of a content indescribably various, and of an extent without limits. 2. This arrangement of means and ends is entirely foreign to the things existing in the world—it belongs to them merely as a contingent attribute; in other words, the nature of different things could not of itself, whatever means were employed, harmoniously tend towards certain purposes, were they not chosen and directed for these purposes by a rational and disposing principle, in accordance with certain fundamental ideas. 3. There exists, therefore, a sublime and wise cause (or several), which is not merely a blind, all-powerful nature, producing the beings and events which fill the world in unconscious fecundity, but a free and intelligent cause of the world. 4. The unity of this cause may be inferred from the unity of the reciprocal relation existing between the parts of the world, as portions of an artistic edifice—an inference which all our observation favours, and all principles of analogy support.

In the above argument, it is inferred from the analogy of certain products of nature with those of human art, when it compels Nature to bend herself to its purposes, as in the case of a house, a ship, or a watch, that the same kind of causality—namely, understanding and will—resides in nature. It is also declared that the internal possibility of this freely-acting nature (which is the source of all art, and perhaps also of human reason) is derivable from another and superhuman art—a conclusion which would perhaps be found incapable of standing the test of subtle transcendental criticism. But to neither of these opinions shall we at present object. We shall only remark that it must be confessed that, if we are to discuss the subject of cause at all, we cannot proceed more securely than with the guidance of the analogy subsisting between nature and such products of design—these being the only products whose causes and modes of organization are completely known to us. Reason would be unable to satisfy her own requirements, if she passed from a causality which she does know, to obscure and indemonstrable principles of explanation which she does not know.

According to the physico-theological argument, the connection and harmony existing in the world evidence the contingency of the form merely, but not of the matter, that is, of the substance of the world. To establish the truth of the latter opinion, it would be necessary to prove that all things would be in themselves incapable of this harmony and order, unless they were, even as regards their substance, the product of a supreme wisdom. But this would require very different grounds of proof from those presented by the analogy with human art. This proof can at most, therefore, demonstrate the existence of an architect of the world, whose efforts are limited by the capabilities of the material with which he works, but not of a creator of the world, to whom all things are subject. Thus this argument is utterly insufficient for the task before us—a demonstration of the existence of an all-sufficient being. If we wish to prove the contingency of matter, we must have recourse to a transcendental argument, which the physico-theological was constructed expressly to avoid.

We infer, from the order and design visible in the universe, as a disposition of a thoroughly contingent character, the existence of a cause proportionate thereto. The conception of this cause must contain certain determinate qualities, and it must therefore be regarded as the conception of

a being which possesses all power, wisdom, and so on, in one word, all perfection—the conception, that is, of an all-sufficient being. For the predicates of very great, astonishing, or immeasurable power and excellence, give us no determinate conception of the thing, nor do they inform us what the thing may be in itself. They merely indicate the relation existing between the magnitude of the object and the observer, who compares it with himself and with his own power of comprehension, and are mere expressions of praise and reverence, by which the object is either magnified, or the observing subject depreciated in relation to the object. Where we have to do with the magnitude (of the perfection) of a thing, we can discover no determinate conception, except that which comprehends all possible perfection or completeness, and it is only the total (omnitudo) of reality which is completely determined in and through its conception alone.

Now it cannot be expected that any one will be bold enough to declare that he has a perfect insight into the relation which the magnitude of the world he contemplates bears (in its extent as well as in its content) to omnipotence, into that of the order and design in the world to the highest wisdom, and that of the unity of the world to the absolute unity of a Supreme Being. Physico-theology is therefore incapable of presenting a determinate conception of a supreme cause of the world, and is therefore insufficient as a principle of theology—a theology which is itself to be the basis of religion.

The attainment of absolute totality is completely impossible on the path of empiricism. And yet this is the path pursued in the physico-theological argument. What means shall we employ to bridge the abyss?

After elevating ourselves to admiration of the magnitude of the power, wisdom, and other attributes of the author of the world, and finding we can advance no further, we leave the argument on empirical grounds, and proceed to infer the contingency of the world from the order and conformity to aims that are observable in it. From this contingency we infer, by the help of transcendental conceptions alone, the existence of something absolutely necessary; and, still advancing, proceed from the conception of the absolute necessity of the first cause to the completely determined or determining conception thereof—the conception of an all-embracing reality. Thus the physico-theological, failing in its undertaking, recurs in its embarrassment to the cosmological argument; and, as this is merely the ontological argument in disguise, it executes its design solely by the aid of pure reason, although it at first professed to have no connection with this faculty and to base its entire procedure upon experience alone.

The physico-theologians have therefore no reason to regard with such contempt the transcendental mode of argument, and to look down upon it, with the conceit of clear-sighted observers of nature, as the brain-cobweb of obscure speculatists. For, if they reflect upon and examine their own arguments, they will find that, after following for some time the path of nature and experience, and discovering themselves no nearer their object, they suddenly leave this path and pass into the region of pure possibility, where they hope to reach upon the wings of ideas what had eluded all their empirical investigations. Gaining, as they think, a firm footing after this immense leap, they extend their determinate conception—into the possession of which they have come, they know not how—over the whole sphere of creation, and explain their ideal, which is entirely a product of pure reason, by illustrations drawn from experience—though in a degree miserably unworthy of

the grandeur of the object, while they refuse to acknowledge that they have arrived at this cognition or hypothesis by a very different road from that of experience.

Thus the physico-theological is based upon the cosmological, and this upon the ontological proof of the existence of a Supreme Being; and as besides these three there is no other path open to speculative reason, the ontological proof, on the ground of pure conceptions of reason, is the only possible one, if any proof of a proposition so far transcending the empirical exercise of the understanding is possible at all.

Section VII. Critique of all Theology based upon Speculative Principles of Reason

If by the term theology I understand the cognition of a primal being, that cognition is based either upon reason alone (theologia rationalis) or upon revelation (theologia revelata). The former cogitates its object either by means of pure transcendental conceptions, as an ens originarium, realissimum, ens entium, and is termed transcendental theology; or, by means of a conception derived from the nature of our own mind, as a supreme intelligence, and must then be entitled natural theology. The person who believes in a transcendental theology alone, is termed a deist; he who acknowledges the possibility of a natural theology also, a theist. The former admits that we can cognize by pure reason alone the existence of a Supreme Being, but at the same time maintains that our conception of this being is purely transcendental, and that all we can say of it is that it possesses all reality, without being able to define it more closely. The second asserts that reason is capable of presenting us, from the analogy with nature, with a more definite conception of this being, and that its operations, as the cause of all things, are the results of intelligence and free will. The former regards the Supreme Being as the cause of the world—whether by the necessity of his nature, or as a free agent, is left undetermined; the latter considers this being as the author of the world.

Transcendental theology aims either at inferring the existence of a Supreme Being from a general experience, without any closer reference to the world to which this experience belongs, and in this case it is called cosmotheology; or it endeavours to cognize the existence of such a being, through mere conceptions, without the aid of experience, and is then termed ontotheology.

Natural theology infers the attributes and the existence of an author of the world, from the constitution of, the order and unity observable in, the world, in which two modes of causality must be admitted to exist—those of nature and freedom. Thus it rises from this world to a supreme intelligence, either as the principle of all natural, or of all moral order and perfection. In the former case it is termed physico-theology, in the latter, ethical or moral-theology.[69]

Not theological ethics; for this science contains ethical laws, which presuppose the existence of a Supreme Governor of the world; while moral-theology, on the contrary, is the expression of a conviction of the existence of a Supreme Being, founded upon ethical laws.

As we are wont to understand by the term God not merely an eternal nature, the operations of which are insensate and blind, but a Supreme Being, who is the free and intelligent author of all things, and as it is this latter view alone that can be of interest to humanity, we might, in strict rigour, deny to the deist any belief in God at all, and regard him merely as a maintainer of the

existence of a primal being or thing—the supreme cause of all other things. But, as no one ought to be blamed, merely because he does not feel himself justified in maintaining a certain opinion, as if he altogether denied its truth and asserted the opposite, it is more correct—as it is less harsh—to say, the deist believes in a God, the theist in a living God (summa intelligentia). We shall now proceed to investigate the sources of all these attempts of reason to establish the existence of a Supreme Being.

It may be sufficient in this place to define theoretical knowledge or cognition as knowledge of that which is, and practical knowledge as knowledge of that which ought to be. In this view, the theoretical employment of reason is that by which I cognize à priori (as necessary) that something is, while the practical is that by which I cognize à priori what ought to happen. Now, if it is an indubitably certain, though at the same time an entirely conditioned truth, that something is, or ought to happen, either a certain determinate condition of this truth is absolutely necessary, or such a condition may be arbitrarily presupposed. In the former case the condition is postulated (per thesin), in the latter supposed (per hypothesin). There are certain practical laws—those of morality—which are absolutely necessary. Now, if these laws necessarily presuppose the existence of some being, as the condition of the possibility of their obligatory power, this being must be postulated, because the conditioned, from which we reason to this determinate condition, is itself cognized à priori as absolutely necessary. We shall at some future time show that the moral laws not merely presuppose the existence of a Supreme Being, but also, as themselves absolutely necessary in a different relation, demand or postulate it—although only from a practical point of view. The discussion of this argument we postpone for the present.

When the question relates merely to that which is, not to that which ought to be, the conditioned which is presented in experience is always cogitated as contingent. For this reason its condition cannot be regarded as absolutely necessary, but merely as relatively necessary, or rather as needful; the condition is in itself and à priori a mere arbitrary presupposition in aid of the cognition, by reason, of the conditioned. If, then, we are to possess a theoretical cognition of the absolute necessity of a thing, we cannot attain to this cognition otherwise than à priori by means of conceptions; while it is impossible in this way to cognize the existence of a cause which bears any relation to an existence given in experience.

Theoretical cognition is speculative when it relates to an object or certain conceptions of an object which is not given and cannot be discovered by means of experience. It is opposed to the cognition of nature, which concerns only those objects or predicates which can be presented in a possible experience.

The principle that everything which happens (the empirically contingent) must have a cause, is a principle of the cognition of nature, but not of speculative cognition. For, if we change it into an abstract principle, and deprive it of its reference to experience and the empirical, we shall find that it cannot with justice be regarded any longer as a synthetical proposition, and that it is impossible to discover any mode of transition from that which exists to something entirely different—termed cause. Nay, more, the conception of a cause likewise that of the contingent—loses, in this speculative mode of employing it, all significance, for its objective reality and meaning are comprehensible from experience alone.

When from the existence of the universe and the things in it the existence of a cause of the universe is inferred, reason is proceeding not in the natural, but in the speculative method. For the principle of the former enounces, not that things themselves or substances, but only that which happens or their states—as empirically contingent, have a cause: the assertion that the existence of substance itself is contingent is not justified by experience, it is the assertion of a reason employing its principles in a speculative manner. If, again, I infer from the form of the universe, from the way in which all things are connected and act and react upon each other, the existence of a cause entirely distinct from the universe—this would again be a judgement of purely speculative reason; because the object in this case—the cause—can never be an object of possible experience. In both these cases the principle of causality, which is valid only in the field of experience—useless and even meaningless beyond this region, would be diverted from its proper destination.

Now I maintain that all attempts of reason to establish a theology by the aid of speculation alone are fruitless, that the principles of reason as applied to nature do not conduct us to any theological truths, and, consequently, that a rational theology can have no existence, unless it is founded upon the laws of morality. For all synthetical principles of the understanding are valid only as immanent in experience; while the cognition of a Supreme Being necessitates their being employed transcendentally, and of this the understanding is quite incapable. If the empirical law of causality is to conduct us to a Supreme Being, this being must belong to the chain of empirical objects—in which case it would be, like all phenomena, itself conditioned. If the possibility of passing the limits of experience be admitted, by means of the dynamical law of the relation of an effect to its cause, what kind of conception shall we obtain by this procedure? Certainly not the conception of a Supreme Being, because experience never presents us with the greatest of all possible effects, and it is only an effect of this character that could witness to the existence of a corresponding cause. If, for the purpose of fully satisfying the requirements of Reason, we recognize her right to assert the existence of a perfect and absolutely necessary being, this can be admitted only from favour, and cannot be regarded as the result or irresistible demonstration. The physico-theological proof may add weight to others—if other proofs there are—by connecting speculation with experience; but in itself it rather prepares the mind for theological cognition, and gives it a right and natural direction, than establishes a sure foundation for theology.

It is now perfectly evident that transcendental questions admit only of transcendental answers—those presented à priori by pure conceptions without the least empirical admixture. But the question in the present case is evidently synthetical—it aims at the extension of our cognition beyond the bounds of experience—it requires an assurance respecting the existence of a being corresponding with the idea in our minds, to which no experience can ever be adequate. Now it has been abundantly proved that all à priori synthetical cognition is possible only as the expression of the formal conditions of a possible experience; and that the validity of all principles depends upon their immanence in the field of experience, that is, their relation to objects of empirical cognition or phenomena. Thus all transcendental procedure in reference to speculative theology is without result.

If any one prefers doubting the conclusiveness of the proofs of our analytic to losing the persuasion of the validity of these old and time honoured arguments, he at least cannot decline answering the

question—how he can pass the limits of all possible experience by the help of mere ideas. If he talks of new arguments, or of improvements upon old arguments, I request him to spare me. There is certainly no great choice in this sphere of discussion, as all speculative arguments must at last look for support to the ontological, and I have, therefore, very little to fear from the argumentative fecundity of the dogmatical defenders of a non-sensuous reason. Without looking upon myself as a remarkably combative person, I shall not decline the challenge to detect the fallacy and destroy the pretensions of every attempt of speculative theology. And yet the hope of better fortune never deserts those who are accustomed to the dogmatical mode of procedure. I shall, therefore, restrict myself to the simple and equitable demand that such reasoners will demonstrate, from the nature of the human mind as well as from that of the other sources of knowledge, how we are to proceed to extend our cognition completely à priori, and to carry it to that point where experience abandons us, and no means exist of guaranteeing the objective reality of our conceptions. In whatever way the understanding may have attained to a conception, the existence of the object of the conception cannot be discovered in it by analysis, because the cognition of the existence of the object depends upon the object's being posited and given in itself apart from the conception. But it is utterly impossible to go beyond our conception, without the aid of experience—which presents to the mind nothing but phenomena, or to attain by the help of mere conceptions to a conviction of the existence of new kinds of objects or supernatural beings.

But although pure speculative reason is far from sufficient to demonstrate the existence of a Supreme Being, it is of the highest utility in correcting our conception of this being—on the supposition that we can attain to the cognition of it by some other means—in making it consistent with itself and with all other conceptions of intelligible objects, clearing it from all that is incompatible with the conception of an ens summun, and eliminating from it all limitations or admixtures of empirical elements.

Transcendental theology is still therefore, notwithstanding its objective insufficiency, of importance in a negative respect; it is useful as a test of the procedure of reason when engaged with pure ideas, no other than a transcendental standard being in this case admissible. For if, from a practical point of view, the hypothesis of a Supreme and All-sufficient Being is to maintain its validity without opposition, it must be of the highest importance to define this conception in a correct and rigorous manner—as the transcendental conception of a necessary being, to eliminate all phenomenal elements (anthropomorphism in its most extended signification), and at the same time to overflow all contradictory assertions—be they atheistic, deistic, or anthropomorphic. This is of course very easy; as the same arguments which demonstrated the inability of human reason to affirm the existence of a Supreme Being must be alike sufficient to prove the invalidity of its denial. For it is impossible to gain from the pure speculation of reason demonstration that there exists no Supreme Being, as the ground of all that exists, or that this being possesses none of those properties which we regard as analogical with the dynamical qualities of a thinking being, or that, as the anthropomorphists would have us believe, it is subject to all the limitations which sensibility imposes upon those intelligences which exist in the world of experience.

A Supreme Being is, therefore, for the speculative reason, a mere ideal, though a faultless one—a conception which perfects and crowns the system of human cognition, but the objective reality of

which can neither be proved nor disproved by pure reason. If this defect is ever supplied by a moral theology, the problematic transcendental theology which has preceded, will have been at least serviceable as demonstrating the mental necessity existing for the conception, by the complete determination of it which it has furnished, and the ceaseless testing of the conclusions of a reason often deceived by sense, and not always in harmony with its own ideas. The attributes of necessity, infinitude, unity, existence apart from the world (and not as a world soul), eternity (free from conditions of time), omnipresence (free from conditions of space), omnipotence, and others, are pure transcendental predicates; and thus the accurate conception of a Supreme Being, which every theology requires, is furnished by transcendental theology alone.

David Hume – An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (Of Miracles)

There is, in Dr. Tillotson's writings, an argument against the real presence, which is as concise, and elegant, and strong as any argument can possibly be supposed against a doctrine, so little worthy of a serious refutation. It is acknowledged on all hands, says that learned prelate, that the authority, either of the scripture or of tradition, is founded merely in the testimony of the apostles, who were eye-witnesses to those miracles of our Saviour, by which he proved his divine mission. Our evidence, then, for the truth of the Christian religion is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses; because, even in the first authors of our religion, it was no greater; and it is evident it must diminish in passing from them to their disciples; nor can any one rest such confidence in their testimony, as in the immediate object of his senses. But a weaker evidence can never destroy a stronger; and therefore, were the doctrine of the real presence ever so clearly revealed in scripture, it were directly contrary to the rules of just reasoning to give our assent to it. It contradicts sense, though both the scripture and tradition, on which it is supposed to be built, carry not such evidence with them as sense; when they are considered merely as external evidences, and are not brought home to every one's breast, by the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing is so convenient as a decisive argument of this kind, which must at least silence the most arrogant bigotry and superstition, and free us from their impertinent solicitations. I flatter myself, that I have discovered an argument of a like nature, which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently, will be useful as long as the world endures. For so long, I presume, will the accounts of miracles and prodigies be found in all history, sacred and profane.

Though experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; it must be acknowledged, that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into errors. One, who in our climate, should expect better weather in any week of June than in one of December, would reason justly, and conformably to experience; but it is certain, that he may happen, in the event, to find himself mistaken. However, we may observe, that, in such a case, he would have no cause to complain of experience; because it commonly informs us beforehand of the uncertainty, by that contrariety of events, which we may learn from a diligent observation. All effects follow not with like certainty from their supposed causes. Some events are found, in all countries and all ages, to have been constantly conjoined together: Others are found to have been

more variable, and sometimes to disappoint our expectations; so that, in our reasonings concerning matter of fact, there are all imaginable degrees of assurance, from the highest certainty to the lowest species of moral evidence.

A wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his past experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event. In other cases, he proceeds with more caution: He weighs the opposite experiments: He considers which side is supported by the greater number of experiments: to that side he inclines, with doubt and hesitation; and when at last he fixes his judgement, the evidence exceeds not what we properly call probability. All probability, then, supposes an opposition of experiments and observations, where the one side is found to overbalance the other, and to produce a degree of evidence, proportioned to the superiority. A hundred instances or experiments on one side, and fifty on another, afford a doubtful expectation of any event; though a hundred uniform experiments, with only one that is contradictory, reasonably beget a pretty strong degree of assurance. In all cases, we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence.

To apply these principles to a particular instance; we may observe, that there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators. This species of reasoning, perhaps, one may deny to be founded on the relation of cause and effect. I shall not dispute about a word. It will be sufficient to observe that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. It being a general maxim, that no objects have any discoverable connexion together, and that all the inferences, which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction; it is evident, that we ought not to make an exception to this maxim in favour of human testimony, whose connexion with any event seems, in itself, as little necessary as any other. Were not the memory tenacious to a certain degree, had not men commonly an inclination to truth and a principle of probity; were they not sensible to shame, when detected in a falsehood: Were not these, I say, discovered by experience to be qualities, inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony. A man delirious, or noted for falsehood and villany, has no manner of authority with us.

And as the evidence, derived from witnesses and human testimony, is founded on past experience, so it varies with the experience, and is regarded either as a proof or a probability, according as the conjunction between any particular kind of report and any kind of object has been found to be constant or variable. There are a number of circumstances to be taken into consideration in all judgements of this kind; and the ultimate standard, by which we determine all disputes, that may arise concerning them, is always derived from experience and observation. Where this experience is not entirely uniform on any side, it is attended with an unavoidable contrariety in our judgements, and with the same opposition and mutual destruction of argument as in every other kind of evidence. We frequently hesitate concerning the reports of others. We balance the opposite

circumstances, which cause any doubt or uncertainty; and when we discover a superiority on any side, we incline to it; but still with a diminution of assurance, in proportion to the force of its antagonist.

This contrariety of evidence, in the present case, may be derived from several different causes; from the opposition of contrary testimony; from the character or number of the witnesses; from the manner of their delivering their testimony; or from the union of all these circumstances. We entertain a suspicion concerning any matter of fact, when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are but few, or of a doubtful character; when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony with hesitation, or on the contrary, with too violent asseverations. There are many other particulars of the same kind, which may diminish or destroy the force of any argument, derived from human testimony.

Suppose, for instance, that the fact, which the testimony endeavours to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual. The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any connexion, which we perceive a priori, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them. But when the fact attested is such a one as has seldom fallen under our observation, here is a contest of two opposite experiences; of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate on the mind by the force, which remains. The very same principle of experience, which gives us a certain degree of assurance in the testimony of witnesses, gives us also, in this case, another degree of assurance against the fact, which they endeavour to establish; from which contradition there necessarily arises a counterpoize, and mutual destruction of belief and authority.

I should not believe such a story were it told me by Cato, was a proverbial saying in Rome, even during the lifetime of that philosophical patriot. The incredibility of a fact, it was allowed, might invalidate so great an authority.

The Indian prince, who refused to believe the first relations concerning the effects of frost, reasoned justly; and it naturally required very strong testimony to engage his assent to facts, that arose from a state of nature, with which he was unacquainted, and which bore so little analogy to those events, of which he had had constant and uniform experience. Though they were not contrary to his experience, they were not conformable to it.

But in order to encrease the probability against the testimony of witnesses, let us suppose, that the fact, which they affirm, instead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous; and suppose also, that the testimony considered apart and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case, there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force, in proportion to that of its antagonist.

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood,

and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior.

The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), 'That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior.' When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority, which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous, than the event which he relates; then, and not till then, can he pretend to command my belief or opinion.

In the foregoing reasoning we have supposed, that the testimony, upon which a miracle is founded, may possibly amount to an entire proof, and that the falsehood of that testimony would be a real prodigy: But it is easy to shew, that we have been a great deal too liberal in our concession, and that there never was a miraculous event established on so full an evidence.

For first, there is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good-sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time, attesting facts performed in such a public manner and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable: All which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men.

Secondly. We may observe in human nature a principle which, if strictly examined, will be found to diminish extremely the assurance, which we might, from human testimony, have, in any kind of prodigy. The maxim, by which we commonly conduct ourselves in our reasonings, is, that the objects, of which we have no experience, resembles those, of which we have; that what we have found to be most usual is always most probable; and that where there is an opposition of arguments, we ought to give the preference to such as are founded on the greatest number of past observations. But though, in proceeding by this rule, we readily reject any fact which is unusual and incredible in an ordinary degree; yet in advancing farther, the mind observes not always the same rule; but

when anything is affirmed utterly absurd and miraculous, it rather the more readily admits of such a fact, upon account of that very circumstance, which ought to destroy all its authority. The passion of surprise and wonder, arising from miracles, being an agreeable emotion, gives a sensible tendency towards the belief of those events, from which it is derived. And this goes so far, that even those who cannot enjoy this pleasure immediately, nor can believe those miraculous events, of which they are informed, yet love to partake of the satisfaction at second-hand or by rebound, and place a pride and delight in exciting the admiration of others.

With what greediness are the miraculous accounts of travellers received, their descriptions of sea and land monsters, their relations of wonderful adventures, strange men, and uncouth manners? But if the spirit of religion join itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony, in these circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority. A religionist may be an enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality: he may know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it, with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause: or even where this delusion has not place, vanity, excited by so strong a temptation, operates on him more powerfully than on the rest of mankind in any other circumstances; and self-interest with equal force. His auditors may not have, and commonly have not, sufficient judgement to canvass his evidence: what judgement they have, they renounce by principle, in these sublime and mysterious subjects: or if they were ever so willing to employ it, passion and a heated imagination disturb the regularity of its operations. Their credulity increases his impudence: and his impudence overpowers their credulity.

Eloquence, when at its highest pitch, leaves little room for reason or reflection; but addressing itself entirely to the fancy or the affections, captivates the willing hearers, and subdues their understanding. Happily, this pitch it seldom attains. But what a Tully or a Demosthenes could scarcely effect over a Roman or Athenian audience, every Capuchin, every itinerant or stationary teacher can perform over the generality of mankind, and in a higher degree, by touching such gross and vulgar passions.

The many instances of forged miracles, and prophecies, and supernatural events, which, in all ages, have either been detected by contrary evidence, or which detect themselves by their absurdity, prove sufficiently the strong propensity of mankind to the extraordinary and the marvellous, and ought reasonably to beget a suspicion against all relations of this kind. This is our natural way of thinking, even with regard to the most common and most credible events. For instance: There is no kind of report which rises so easily, and spreads so quickly, especially in country places and provincial towns, as those concerning marriages; insomuch that two young persons of equal condition never see each other twice, but the whole neighbourhood immediately join them together. The pleasure of telling a piece of news so interesting, of propagating it, and of being the first reporters of it, spreads the intelligence. And this is so well known, that no man of sense gives attention to these reports, till he find them confirmed by some greater evidence. Do not the same passions, and others still stronger, incline the generality of mankind to believe and report, with the greatest vehemence and assurance, all religious miracles?

Thirdly. It forms a strong presumption against all supernatural and miraculous relations, that they are observed chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people has

ever given admission to any of them, that people will be found to have received them from ignorant and barbarous ancestors, who transmitted them with that inviolable sanction and authority, which always attend received opinions. When we peruse the first histories of all nations, we are apt to imagine ourselves transported into some new world; where the whole frame of nature is disjointed, and every element performs its operations in a different manner, from what it does at present. Battles, revolutions, pestilence, famine and death, are never the effect of those natural causes, which we experience. Prodigies, omens, oracles, judgements, quite obscure the few natural events, that are intermingled with them. But as the former grow thinner every page, in proportion as we advance nearer the enlightened ages, we soon learn, that there is nothing mysterious or supernatural in the case, but that all proceeds from the usual propensity of mankind towards the marvellous, and that, though this inclination may at intervals receive a check from sense and learning, it can never be thoroughly extirpated from human nature.

It is strange, a judicious reader is apt to say, upon the perusal of these wonderful historians, that such prodigious events never happen in our days. But it is nothing strange, I hope, that men should lie in all ages. You must surely have seen instances enough of that frailty. You have yourself heard many such marvellous relations started, which, being treated with scorn by all the wise and judicious, have at last been abandoned even by the vulgar. Be assured, that those renowned lies, which have spread and flourished to such a monstrous height, arose from like beginnings; but being sown in a more proper soil, shot up at last into prodigies almost equal to those which they relate.

It was a wise policy in that false prophet, Alexander, who though now forgotten, was once so famous, to lay the first scene of his impostures in Paphlagonia, where, as Lucian tells us, the people were extremely ignorant and stupid, and ready to swallow even the grossest delusion. People at a distance, who are weak enough to think the matter at all worth enquiry, have no opportunity of receiving better information. The stories come magnified to them by a hundred circumstances. Fools are industrious in propagating the imposture; while the wise and learned are contented, in general, to deride its absurdity, without informing themselves of the particular facts, by which it may be distinctly refuted. And thus the impostor above mentioned was enabled to proceed, from his ignorant Paphlagonians, to the enlisting of votaries, even among the Grecian philosophers, and men of the most eminent rank and distinction in Rome: nay, could engage the attention of that sage emperor Marcus Aurelius; so far as to make him trust the success of a military expedition to his delusive prophecies.

The advantages are so great, of starting an imposture among an ignorant people, that, even though the delusion should be too gross to impose on the generality of them (which, though seldom, is sometimes the case) it has a much better chance for succeeding in remote countries, than if the first scene had been laid in a city renowned for arts and knowledge. The most ignorant and barbarous of these barbarians carry the report abroad. None of their countrymen have a large correspondence, or sufficient credit and authority to contradict and beat down the delusion. Men's inclination to the marvellous has full opportunity to display itself. And thus a story, which is universally exploded in the place where it was first started, shall pass for certain at a thousand miles distance. But had Alexander fixed his residence at Athens, the philosophers of that renowned

mart of learning had immediately spread, throughout the whole Roman empire, their sense of the matter; which, being supported by so great authority, and displayed by all the force of reason and eloquence, had entirely opened the eyes of mankind. It is true; Lucian, passing by chance through Paphlagonia, had an opportunity of performing this good office. But, though much to be wished, it does not always happen, that every Alexander meets with a Lucian, ready to expose and detect his impostures.

I may add as a fourth reason, which diminishes the authority of prodigies, that there is no testimony for any, even those which have not been expressly detected, that is not opposed by an infinite number of witnesses; so that not only the miracle destroys the credit of testimony, but the testimony destroys itself. To make this the better understood, let us consider, that, in matters of religion, whatever is different is contrary; and that it is impossible the religions of ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, and of China should, all of them, be established on any solid foundation. Every miracle, therefore, pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions (and all of them abound in miracles), as its direct scope is to establish the particular system to which it is attributed; so has it the same force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every other system. In destroying a rival system, it likewise destroys the credit of those miracles, on which that system was established; so that all the prodigies of different religions are to be regarded as contrary facts, and the evidences of these prodigies, whether weak or strong, as opposite to each other. According to this method of reasoning, when we believe any miracle of Mahomet or his successors, we have for our warrant the testimony of a few barbarous Arabians: And on the other hand, we are to regard the authority of Titus Livius, Plutarch, Tacitus, and, in short, of all the authors and witnesses, Grecian, Chinese, and Roman Catholic, who have related any miracle in their particular religion; I say, we are to regard their testimony in the same light as if they had mentioned that Mahometan miracle, and had in express terms contradicted it, with the same certainty as they have for the miracle they relate. This argument may appear over subtile and refined; but is not in reality different from the reasoning of a judge, who supposes, that the credit of two witnesses, maintaining a crime against any one, is destroyed by the testimony of two others, who affirm him to have been two hundred leagues distant, at the same instant when the crime is said to have been committed.

One of the best attested miracles in all profane history, is that which Tacitus reports of Vespasian, who cured a blind man in Alexandria, by means of his spittle, and a lame man by the mere touch of his foot; in obedience to a vision of the god Serapis, who had enjoined them to have recourse to the Emperor, for these miraculous cures. The story may be seen in that fine historian23; where every circumstance seems to add weight to the testimony, and might be displayed at large with all the force of argument and eloquence, if any one were now concerned to enforce the evidence of that exploded and idolatrous superstition. The gravity, solidity, age, and probity of so great an emperor, who, through the whole course of his life, conversed in a familiar manner with his friends and courtiers, and never affected those extraordinary airs of divinity assumed by Alexander and Demetrius. The historian, a cotemporary writer, noted for candour and veracity, and withal, the greatest and most penetrating genius, perhaps, of all antiquity; and so free from any tendency to credulity, that he even lies under the contrary imputation, of atheism and profaneness: The persons, from whose authority he related the miracle, of established character for judgement and veracity, as we may well presume; eye-witnesses of the fact, and confirming their testimony, after the

Flavian family was despoiled of the empire, and could no longer give any reward, as the price of a lie. Utrumque, qui interfuere, nunc quoque memorant, postquam nullum mendacio pretium. To which if we add the public nature of the facts, as related, it will appear, that no evidence can well be supposed stronger for so gross and so palpable a falsehood.

There is also a memorable story related by Cardinal de Retz, which may well deserve our consideration. When that intriguing politician fled into Spain, to avoid the persecution of his enemies, he passed through Saragossa, the capital of Arragon, where he was shewn, in the cathedral, a man, who had served seven years as a door-keeper, and was well known to every body in town, that had ever paid his devotions at that church. He had been seen, for so long a time, wanting a leg; but recovered that limb by the rubbing of holy oil upon the stump; and the cardinal assures us that he saw him with two legs. This miracle was vouched by all the canons of the church; and the whole company in town were appealed to for a confirmation of the fact; whom the cardinal found, by their zealous devotion, to be thorough believers of the miracle. Here the relater was also cotemporary to the supposed prodigy, of an incredulous and libertine character, as well as of great genius; the miracle of so singular a nature as could scarcely admit of a counterfeit, and the witnesses very numerous, and all of them, in a manner, spectators of the fact, to which they gave their testimony. And what adds mightily to the force of the evidence, and may double our surprise on this occasion, is, that the cardinal himself, who relates the story, seems not to give any credit to it, and consequently cannot be suspected of any concurrence in the holy fraud. He considered justly, that it was not requisite, in order to reject a fact of this nature, to be able accurately to disprove the testimony, and to trace its falsehood, through all the circumstances of knavery and credulity which produced it. He knew, that, as this was commonly altogether impossible at any small distance of time and place; so was it extremely difficult, even where one was immediately present, by reason of the bigotry, ignorance, cunning, and roguery of a great part of mankind. He therefore concluded, like a just reasoner, that such an evidence carried falsehood upon the very face of it, and that a miracle, supported by any human testimony, was more properly a subject of derision than of argument.

There surely never was a greater number of miracles ascribed to one person, than those, which were lately said to have been wrought in France upon the tomb of Abb(c) Paris, the famous Jansenist, with whose sanctity the people were so long deluded. The curing of the sick, giving hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, were every where talked of as the usual effects of that holy sepulchre. But what is more extraordinary; many of the miracles were immediately proved upon the spot, before judges of unquestioned integrity, attested by witnesses of credit and distinction, in a learned age, and on the most eminent theatre that is now in the world. Nor is this all: a relation of them was published and dispersed every where; nor were the Jesuits, though a learned body, supported by the civil magistrate, and determined enemies to those opinions, in whose favour the miracles were said to have been wrought, ever able distinctly to refute or detect them24. Where shall we find such a number of circumstances, agreeing to the corroboration of one fact? And what have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events, which they relate? And this surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation.

Is the consequence just, because some human testimony has the utmost force and authority in some cases, when it relates the battle of Philippi or Pharsalia for instance; that therefore all kinds of testimony must, in all cases, have equal force and authority? Suppose that the Caesarean and Pompeian factions had, each of them, claimed the victory in these battles, and that the historians of each party had uniformly ascribed the advantage to their own side; how could mankind, at this distance, have been able to determine between them? The contrariety is equally strong between the miracles related by Herodotus or Plutarch, and those delivered by Mariana, Bede, or any monkish historian.

The wise lend a very academic faith to every report which favours the passion of the reporter; whether it magnifies his country, his family, or himself, or in any other way strikes in with his natural inclinations and propensities. But what greater temptation than to appear a missionary, a prophet, an ambassador from heaven? Who would not encounter many dangers and difficulties, in order to attain so sublime a character? Or if, by the help of vanity and a heated imagination, a man has first made a convert of himself, and entered seriously into the delusion; who ever scruples to make use of pious frauds, in support of so holy and meritorious a cause?

The smallest spark may here kindle into the greatest flame; because the materials are always prepared for it. The avidum genus auricularum25, the gazing populace, receive greedily, without examination, whatever sooths superstition, and promotes wonder.

How many stories of this nature have, in all ages, been detected and exploded in their infancy? How many more have been celebrated for a time, and have afterwards sunk into neglect and oblivion? Where such reports, therefore, fly about, the solution of the phenomenon is obvious; and we judge in conformity to regular experience and observation, when we account for it by the known and natural principles of credulity and delusion. And shall we, rather than have a recourse to so natural a solution, allow of a miraculous violation of the most established laws of nature?

I need not mention the difficulty of detecting a falsehood in any private or even public history, at the place, where it is said to happen; much more when the scene is removed to ever so small a distance. Even a court of judicature, with all the authority, accuracy, and judgement, which they can employ, find themselves often at a loss to distinguish between truth and falsehood in the most recent actions. But the matter never comes to any issue, if trusted to the common method of altercations and debate and flying rumours; especially when men's passions have taken part on either side.

In the infancy of new religions, the wise and learned commonly esteem the matter too inconsiderable to deserve their attention or regard. And when afterwards they would willingly detect the cheat, in order to undeceive the deluded multitude, the season is now past, and the records and witnesses, which might clear up the matter, have perished beyond recovery.

No means of detection remain, but those which must be drawn from the very testimony itself of the reporters: and these, though always sufficient with the judicious and knowing, are commonly too fine to fall under the comprehension of the vulgar.

Upon the whole, then, it appears, that no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof; and that, even supposing it amounted to a proof, it would be opposed by another proof; derived from the very nature of the fact, which it would endeavour to establish. It is experience only, which gives authority to human testimony; and it is the same experience, which assures us of the laws of nature. When, therefore, these two kinds of experience are contrary, we have nothing to do but substract the one from the other, and embrace an opinion, either on one side or the other, with that assurance which arises from the remainder. But according to the principle here explained, this substraction, with regard to all popular religions, amounts to an entire annihilation; and therefore we may establish it as a maxim, that no human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle, and make it a just foundation for any such system of religion.

I beg the limitations here made may be remarked, when I say, that a miracle can never be proved, so as to be the foundation of a system of religion. For I own, that otherwise, there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony; though, perhaps, it will be impossible to find any such in all the records of history. Thus, suppose, all authors, in all languages, agree, that, from the first of January 1600, there was a total darkness over the whole earth for eight days: suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people: that all travellers, who return from foreign countries, bring us accounts of the same tradition, without the least variation or contradiction: it is evident, that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact, ought to receive it as certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it might be derived. The decay, corruption, and dissolution of nature, is an event rendered probable by so many analogies, that any phenomenon, which seems to have a tendency towards that catastrophe, comes within the reach of human testimony, if that testimony be very extensive and uniform.

But suppose, that all the historians who treat of England, should agree, that, on the first of January 1600, Queen Elizabeth died; that both before and after her death she was seen by her physicians and the whole court, as is usual with persons of her rank; that her successor was acknowledged and proclaimed by the parliament; and that, after being interred a month, she again appeared, resumed the throne, and governed England for three years: I must confess that I should be surprised at the concurrence of so many odd circumstances, but should not have the least inclination to believe so miraculous an event. I should not doubt of her pretended death, and of those other public circumstances that followed it: I should only assert it to have been pretended, and that it neither was, nor possibly could be real. You would in vain object to me the difficulty, and almost impossibility of deceiving the world in an affair of such consequence; the wisdom and solid judgement of that renowned queen; with the little or no advantage which she could reap from so poor an artifice: All this might astonish me; but I would still reply, that the knavery and folly of men are such common phenomena, that I should rather believe the most extraordinary events to arise from their concurrence, than admit of so signal a violation of the laws of nature.

But should this miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion; men, in all ages, have been so much imposed on by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be a full proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even reject it without farther examination. Though the Being to whom the miracle is ascribed, be,

in this case, Almighty, it does not, upon that account, become a whit more probable; since it is impossible for us to know the attributes or actions of such a Being, otherwise than from the experience which we have of his productions, in the usual course of nature. This still reduces us to past observation, and obliges us to compare the instances of the violation of truth in the testimony of men, with those of the violation of the laws of nature by miracles, in order to judge which of them is most likely and probable. As the violations of truth are more common in the testimony concerning religious miracles, than in that concerning any other matter of fact; this must diminish very much the authority of the former testimony, and make us form a general resolution, never to lend any attention to it, with whatever specious pretence it may be covered.

Lord Bacon seems to have embraced the same principles of reasoning. 'We ought,' says he, 'to make a collection or particular history of all monsters and prodigious births or productions, and in a word of every thing new, rare, and extraordinary in nature. But this must be done with the most severe scrutiny, lest we depart from truth. Above all, every relation must be considered as suspicious, which depends in any degree upon religion, as the prodigies of Livy: And no less so, every thing that is to be found in the writers of natural magic or alchimy, or such authors, who seem, all of them, to have an unconquerable appetite for falsehood and fable.

I am the better pleased with the method of reasoning here delivered, as I think it may serve to confound those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the Christian Religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion is founded on Faith, not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it to put it to such a trial as it is, by no means, fitted to endure. To make this more evident, let us examine those miracles, related in scripture; and not to lose ourselves in too wide a field, let us confine ourselves to such as we find in the Pentateuch, which we shall examine, according to the principles of these pretended Christians, not as the word or testimony of God himself, but as the production of a mere human writer and historian. Here then we are first to consider a book, presented to us by a barbarous and ignorant people, written in an age when they were still more barbarous, and in all probability long after the facts which it relates, corroborated by no concurring testimony, and resembling those fabulous accounts, which every nation gives of its origin. Upon reading this book, we find it full of prodigies and miracles. It gives an account of a state of the world and of human nature entirely different from the present: Of our fall from that state: Of the age of man, extended to near a thousand years: Of the destruction of the world by a deluge: Of the arbitrary choice of one people, as the favourites of heaven; and that people the countrymen of the author: Of their deliverance from bondage by prodigies the most astonishing imaginable: I desire any one to lay his hand upon his heart, and after a serious consideration declare, whether he thinks that the falsehood of such a book, supported by such a testimony, would be more extraordinary and miraculous than all the miracles it relates; which is, however, necessary to make it be received, according to the measures of probability above established.

What we have said of miracles may be applied, without any variation, to prophecies; and indeed, all prophecies are real miracles, and as such only, can be admitted as proofs of any revelation. If it did not exceed the capacity of human nature to foretell future events, it would be absurd to employ any prophecy as an argument for a divine mission or authority from heaven. So that, upon

the whole, we may conclude, that the Christian Religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even at this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one. Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity: And whoever is moved by Faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience.

Kai Nielson – Atheism and Philosophy, 2005

In Defense of Atheism

Jews, Christians, and Moslems do not and cannot take their religion to be simply their fundamental conceptual framework or metaphysical system. Fundamental human commitments and attitudes are an essential part of being religious. The feeling of gratitude for one's very existence no matter what the quality or condition of that existence is at the very heart of religion. To be religious consists fundamentally in living in a certain way, in holding a certain set of convictions, in the having of certain attitudes, and in being a member of a distinctive confessional group. Religious discourse reflects this. Religious utterances express our basic sense of security in life and our gratitude for being alive. Jews, Christians, and Moslems pray, and engage in rituals and ceremonies in the doing of which they use language in a distinctive way. In religious discourse, we give voice to our deepest and most pervasive hopes, ideals, and wishes concerning what we should try to be and what expectations we may entertain. If we really are religious and do not regard religion simply as "moral poetry" but use religious discourse seriously to make distinctively religious claims, we commit ourselves to what we as believers take to be a certain general view about "the ultimate basis of the universe." This is exhibited in the very use of certain religious utterances. (1) God is my Creator to whom everything is owed. Reprinted from Perspectives in Education, Religion, and the Arts, edited by Howard E. Kiefer and Milton K. Munitz, pp. 127-166, by permission of the State University of New York Press.

And (2) God is the God of mercy of Whose forgiveness I stand in need. are paradigms of the above mentioned use of religious discourse; they presumably are fact-stating uses of discourse, though this is not all they are, and they are closely linked with other uses of religious discourse. Such ceremonial and evocative talk as we find in Christianity could hardly exist if it were not for such uses of language as exhibited in (1) and (2). (1) and (2) are not theologians' talk about God but are sample bits of living religious discourse. Yet for believer and nonbeliever alike they are perplexing bits of discourse. Wittgenstein and others have taught the importance of context. We must not examine religious utterances—especially those which appear to have a statement-making function—in isolation, but we should examine them on location as part of that complex activity we call "religion." To understand a religious utterance properly we must come to understand the topic or topics of our discourse and the purposes for which it is used. Indeed, in using language we must not forget what Strawson has called the Principle of the Presumption of Knowledge or the Principle of Relevance. Of all speech functions to which this applies, it applies most appositely to the making of statements, which is indeed a central speech function if anything is. That is to say, when "an empirically assertive utterance is made with an informative intention" there is the standing presumption on the part of the speaker that "those who hear him have knowledge of

empirical facts relevant to the particular point to be imparted in the utterance." Moreover, statements have topics, they are in that sense about something, and reflect what Strawson calls a "centre of interest." To understand a statement we must understand the topic or center of interest involved in its assertion. We must not forget that we do not characteristically give out information or give voice to utterances in an isolated, unconnected manner; but only as part of some connected discourses. We need a Principle of Relevance to pick out, in terms of the topic in question, the proper kind of answer to what a statement is about. This is integral to our understanding of how to take (understand) the statement in question. Take the classic example "The King of France is bald." We need a context, an application of the Principles of Relevance and the Presumption of Knowledge, to know how to take it. If our context is the present, and the relevant questions are "What is the King of France like?" or "Is he bald?" then neither "The King of France is bald" nor "The King of France is not bald" would be a correct answer, for the above questions in the above context are not to be answered, but are to be replied to by being rejected. The proper reply—a reply which rejects such questions—is: (De Gaulle notwithstanding) "There is no King of France." But if our topic is historical and, with some specific period in mind, we are asking, "What bald notables are there?"; "The King of France is bald" in such a changed context is an appropriate answer. And here it is a true or false statement. "God," like "the King of France," is what Strawson calls a referring expression, though this shouldn't be taken to imply that it is simply a referring expression. In asserting that they are referring expressions, I am giving you to understand that presumably both expressions make identifying reference. Referring expressions may be names, pronouns, definite descriptions or demonstrative descriptions. In using referring expressions in identifying descriptions to make identifying references, e.g., "The Point Judith Ferry is White" or "Block Island is windy," we do not, Strawson points out, inform the audience of the existence of what our referring expressions refer to. Rather the very task of identifying reference can be undertaken "only by a speaker who knows or presumes his audience to be already in possession of such knowledge of existence... ." Similarly, when a religious man utters (1) or (2)—our paradigm religious utterances quoted above—there is the presumption that the speaker understands "God" and knows or believes in the reality of what is being talked about. The acceptance of the truth of (1) and (2) is partially definitive of what it is to be a Jew or Christian. In asserting (1) and (2), the religious man presupposes that there is a God and that this God has a certain character. The atheist, on the other hand, does not believe that (1) and (2) are true because he does not accept the presupposition on which they are made, namely that there is a God. He either does not accept such a proposition because he believes it to be false or because he believes the concept of God to be an incoherent concept. If he believes that the concept of God is incoherent, then he must also believe that the supposition on which (1) and (2) are based could not possibly be true. The agnostic, in turn, does not accept the presupposition on which (1) and (2) are built because he feels that he does not have sufficient grounds for accepting it even on faith, and yet he is not convinced that we have sufficiently good grounds to be justified in dismissing it as false or utterly incoherent. As I remarked initially, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are not by any means constituted by the making and accepting of certain statements. Rather the making of religious statements like (1) and (2) are the cornerstones on which all the other types of religious utterances in such religions depend; and they in return presuppose that the statement "There is a God" is true, and that in turn presupposes that "There is a God" is a genuine statement and that the concept of God is a viable

concept. The most crucial question we can ask about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is whether these religious presuppositions are justified. It might be felt that I have already too much ignored context. In live religious discourse, it is sometimes maintained, questions about the existence of God or the coherence of the concept of God do not arise. It is only by ignoring the context of religious talk that I can even make them seem like real questions. There are multiple confusions involved in this objection. First, believers characteristically have doubts; even the man in "the circle of faith" is threatened with disbelief. Tormenting religious doubts arise in the religious life itself and they are often engendered by some firstorder uses of God-talk. "All my life I have lived under an illusion. There is no Divine Reality at all" is first-order God-talk and not talk about talk, e.g., "The word 'God' only has emotive meaning." The above first-order religious utterance has a natural context and topic for a religious man locked in a religious crisis. Most atheists and agnostics were once believers—in our traditions they were once Jews, Christians or Moslems—and they have a participant's understanding of these forms of life. Many of them, like Hagerstrom, Joyce or Sartre, have been caught up and immersed in such forms of life. They are not like anthropologists who in trying to gain an understanding that approximates a participant's understanding are trying to grasp how the discourses hang together. Moreover—to zero in on the critical objection about context—people who have a participant's grasp of the form of life in which (1) and (2) are embedded know how to use them and can readily, for certain purposes, prescind in reflecting about them from the context in which they are at home; for they know in what sort of linguistic environment they belong and to what sort of topics, centers of interest, they are directed. Reflecting about them in their religious context, we say that they presuppose the intelligibility and truth of "There is a God." Context or not, it is this traditional and central question that we need to face in asking fundamental questions about the Judeo-Christian tradition, though if we do not understand the environment in which the utterances which presuppose it are at home, we will not understand what is involved in such a question.

II

In pursuing this question let us start quite simply but centrally by asking: Why should anyone be an agnostic or an atheist? Why should this question about God be such a biting one? Formerly skeptical philosophers could not bring themselves to accept religious beliefs because they felt the proofs all failed, the problem of evil was intract- able and the evidence offered for believing in the existence of God was inadequate. But contemporary philosophical disbelief cuts deeper and poses more fundamental problems, problems which challenge even the fideist who, a la Kierkegaard, would claim that the last thing a genuine knight of faith would want or should have is a proof of God's existence. Ronald Hepburn succinctly states the sort of considera- tions that are involved in that "deeper ground": Where one gives an account of an expression in our language, and where that expression is one that refers to an existent of some kind, one needs to provide not only a set of rules for the use of the expression, but also an indication of how the referring is to be done—through direct pointing, perhaps, or through giving instructions for an indirect method of identi- fying the entity. Can this be done in the case of God? Pointing, clearly, is inappropriate, God being no finite object in the world. The theologian may suggest a number of options at this point. He may say: God can be identified as that being upon whom the world can be felt as utterly dependent, who is the completion of its incompletenesses, whose presence is faintly adumbrated in experience

of the awesome and the numinous. Clear direction-giving has here broken down; the theologian may well admit that his language is less descriptive or argumentative than obliquely evocative. Does this language succeed in establishing that statements about God have a reference? To persons susceptible to re- ligious experience but at the same time logically and critically alert, it may seem just barely to succeed, or it may seem just barely to fail. Some may even oscillate uneasily between these alternatives without finding a definite procedure of decision to help them discriminate once for all. An agnostic, abreast of contemporary philosophical developments, will indeed oscillate in this fashion. "God" is a referring expression whose referent obviously cannot be indicated by ostension. The ag- nostic clearly recognizes this and he also recognizes the need to exhibit an adequate nonanthropomorphic extralinguistic referent for "God." In essence his doubt comes to this: is the concept of God sufficiently coherent to make belief possible for a reasonable, nonevasive man? He knows that philosophically sophisticated, reflective Jews and Christians do not deny that the concept of God is a difficult, elusive, paradoxical concept. They stress that it could not be otherwise, but believe that it is not so elusive, not so ill-conceived, as to fail to make an intelligible and yet a religiously appropriate reference. In talking about God, a believer is committed to the belief that we are talking about a mystery, but while God, by common reflective consent, is indeed in large measure incomprehensible, the concept of God is not so utterly incoherent as to vitiate religious belief. This is the minimal commitment of a religious man; he may share much with the agnostic but this much he does believe; he must take his stand here. I shall argue that both the agnostic and the believer are mistaken. Careful reflection on the use of "God" in the stream of Jewish and Christian life is enough to justify an atheism which asserts that the concept of God is so incoherent that there could not possibly be a referent for the word "God." I take it here that we are speaking of Jews and Christians who have advanced beyond anthropomorphism; Jews and Christians, who as MacQuarrie puts it, have revolted de- cisively "against the idea that the divine can be objectified, so as to manifest itself in sensible phenomena." The Jew, Christian or Mos- lem who remains an anthropomorphite simply has false, superstitious beliefs. But I am concerned here with the Jew, Christian or Moslem who, consciously at least, is beyond anthropomorphism. I am main- taining against him that his belief in God is so incoherent that it could not possibly be true. If this controversial philosophical thesis is correct, it would have quite concrete normative consequences, for if it is correct, the rational thing to do is to reject belief in the God of the Jews, Christians, and Moslems.

Ill

In arguing that the concept of God is incoherent, I am not claiming that "God" is utterly meaningless. Surely "God" has a use in the language; there are deviant and nondeviant bits of God-talk. If I say "God is a ride in a yellow submarine" or "God brews good coffee" or even "God dieted," I have not said something that is false; I have not even succeeded in saying something blasphemous; I have rather indicated, if I make such utterances with a serious intent, that I do not understand God-talk. In saying something such as "God is a ride in a yellow submarine" I have said something closer to "Quite grounds calculated carefully" or "Elope sea with trigonometry." In short, my utterances are without a literal meaning. "God is a ride in a yellow submarine" could indeed be a metaphor. In the context of a poem or song, it might be given a meaning, but taken just like that it does not have a meaning. But even out of context—say in the middle of a

commencement address—"Pass me a peanut butter sandwich" would be perfectly meaningful, would have a literal meaning, though the point, if any, of uttering it would remain obscure. However, "God brews good coffee," like "Elope sea with trigonometry," are immedi- ately recognized as not even being absurdly false like "Humphrey walked on water" but as being without any literal meaning. "God is a ride in a yellow submarine" or "God brews coffee" is immediately and unequivocally recognized as deviant by people with a participant's grasp of God-talk, while other bits of God-talk are immediately recog- nized to be nondeviant and do in fact have a use in the language, e.g., "Oh God be my Sword and my strength" or "God so loved mankind that he gave to the world his only son." Even agnostics and atheists who understand how to use Jewish and Christian religious talk do not balk at such nondeviant utterances. If they are reading a religious novel or sermon, they keep right on going and do not balk at these nondeviant sentences, e.g., "God protect me in my need," as they would at "God lost weight last week." Philosophically perplexed as they are about nondeviant God-talk, they do not balk at it, while they do in a quite ordinary way balk at "Procrastination drinks grief or "God makes good coffee." There are absurdities and absurdities. Thus it is plainly a mistake to say that God-talk is meaningless. However, in saying that the concept of God is incoherent, I am saying that where "God" is used nonanthropomorphically, as it is in at least officially developed Jewish and Christian God-talk, there occur sentences such as (1) and (2) which purportedly have a statement- making function, yet no identifiable state of affairs can be charac- terized which would make such putative religious statements true and no intelligible directions have been given for identifying the supposed referent for the word "God." Religious believers speak of religious truth but "religious truth" is a Homeless Watson. God, as Hepburn points out, cannot be pointed to but must be identified intralinguistically through certain descriptions, if He can be identified at all. But the putative descriptions Hepburn mentions will not do. If in trying to identify God we speak of "that being upon whom the world can be felt to be utterly dependent," nothing has been accomplished, for what does it mean to speak of "the world (the uni- verse) as being utterly dependent" or even dependent at all? (And if we do not understand this, we do not know what it would be like to feel that the world is utterly dependent.) If we are puzzled by "God," we will be equally puzzled by such phrases. We know what it means to say a child, an adult, a nation, a species, a lake is dependent on something. We could even give sense to the earth's being dependent on something, but no sense has been given to the universe's being dependent on anything. What are the sufficient conditions for the universe being dependent? What would make it true or false or what would even count for the truth or falsity of the putative statement "The universe is dependent" or "The universe is not dependent"? To answer by speaking of "God," e.g., the universe is dependent because God is its final cause, is to pull oneself up by one's own bootstraps, for talk of the dependency of the universe was appealed to in the first place in order to enable us to identify the alleged referent of "God." And to speak of a logically necessary being upon whom the universe depends is to appeal to a self-contradictory conception, for only propositions or statements, not beings, can either be logically necessary or fail to be logically necessary. Yet to speak of a "factually necessary being" upon whom the universe depends is again to pull oneself up by one's own bootstraps; for what would count toward establishing the truth or falsity of a statement asserting or denying the existence of such an alleged reality? Nothing has been specified and no directions have been given for identifying "a self-existent being" or "a self-caused being" or "a necessary being" or "a totally independent being."

All these expressions purport to be referring expressions, but no rules (implicit or explicit) or regulations have been discovered for identifying their putative referents. With them we are in at least as much trouble as we are with "God," and unlike "God," they do not even have an established use in the language. It is indeed true that Jews and Christians do not think of God as something or someone who might or might not exist. If God exists, He somehow exists necessarily. But given the self-contradictoriness of the concept of a logically necessary being or existent, it cannot be true that there can be anything which must exist simply because its existence is logically possible. Moreover, no sense has been given to the claim that there is something—some given reality—which categorically must exist. It may well be that when believers use "God" in sentences like (1) and (2) they feel a la Otto as if they were in the presence of a reality which is awesome and numinous—an "ultimate reality" whose presence is but faintly adumbrated in experience. Yet if this numinosity is taken to be the God of the developed Judeo-Christian tradition, it is taken to be "transcendent to the world." But, while "transcendent to the world" is at best an obscure phrase, it should still be evident that "a transcendent X" could not be "an X whose presence was given in experience." Something given in experience would eo ipso be nontranscendent, for it would automatically be part of the spatio-temporal world. Believers, who in defending the coherence of this belief appeal to their experience of God, are pinned by a Morton's fork: on the one hand, it is not logically possible to encounter a "reality transcendent to the world" and, on the other, if our numinosity is not thought to be transcendent, we are no longer talking of the God of developed Judeo-Christianity.

IV

The central beliefs of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are indeed metaphysical beliefs since their scope purports to transcend the em- pirical world. If we are to come to grips with Judaism or Christianity there is no avoiding what Hagerstrom labelled "metaphysical religiosity." Such a metaphysical religiosity remains in even a minimal characterization of the common core of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, for they all affirm the reality of one and only one God who is said to have created the universe out of nothing, and man, regarded as a sinful, creaturely being, is taken to be utterly dependent on this creator in whose purpose man is said to discover his own reason for living. To be a Jew, Christian or Moslem is to believe much more than that but it is to believe that, and it is here that we find, so to say, the basic propositions of faith upon which the whole edifice of western religiosity stands or falls. If in these religions there is to be religious truth, the statements expressing these core religious beliefs must be true, but, it should be objected, their meaning is so indeterminate, so prob- lematical, that it is doubtful whether we have in them anything sufficiently coherent to constitute true or false statements. To understand what it is to speak of the reality of God essentially involves understanding the phrase "creator of the universe out of nothing." Theologians characteristically do not mean by this that the universe was created at a moment in time. To speak of such a creator is to speak not of an efficient cause but of a final cause of the universe. It involves making the putative existential claim that there is an eternal, ever present creative source and sustainer of the universe. But do we really understand such talk? We understand what it is for a lake to be a source of a river, for oxygen to be necessary to sustain life, for the winning of the game to be the end for which it is played and for good health to be the reason why we exercise. But "the universe" is not a label for some gigantic thing or process or activity. It

is not a name for a determinate reality whose existence can be sustained or not sustained. Moreover, what would we have to discern or fail to discern to discover or to "see" even darkly the end, the purpose or the meaning of the universe? A asserts the universe has a source or a sustainer and B denies it, but no conceivable recognizable turn of events counts for or against either of their claims; we have no idea what would have to obtain for either A's or B's claim to be so or even probably so. Yet both believe they are making assertions which are true or false. Plainly, language has gone on a holiday. We have bits of discourse which purport to be fact-stating but in reality they fail to come off as factual statements; that is to say, they do not function as fact-stating utterances. They purport to be fact-stating but they are not. But with a failure to make sense here, much more talk essential to the Judeo-Christian picture becomes plainly incoherent. Consider such key bits of God-talk as: (3) God is wholly other than the world He made. (4) God is the creator of the moral order of the universe. (5) The universe is absolutely dependent on God. In reflecting on them, we should not forget that "the world" (the "universe") does not denote a thing, an entity, process or even an aggregate which might be made or brought into existence. Moreover there is the ancient point that "to make something" presupposes that there already is something out of which it is made. If it is replied that I am forgetting my previous remark that God is taken to be the final cause and not the efficient cause of the universe and that "make" here means "sustain" or "order," then it should be noted that this still presupposes something to be sustained or ordered; there is no use for "ordering or sustaining out of nothing." Even if we try to give it a use by saying that the universe was chaotic until ordered by God or that unless the universe is a reality ordered by God the universe would be chaotic, we are still lost, for both "the universe is chaotic" and "the universe is not chaotic" are without a coherent use. Since the universe is not an entity or even a totality, there is no sense in talking of its being ordered or not ordered and thus, while we might speak coherently of "the moral order of his life" or "the morality of a culture or ethos," there is no coherent use for "the moral order of the universe," so (4) as well as (3) is nugatory. And again, considering (5), we have seen that no sense has been given to "the universe is dependent" so (5), to put it conservatively, is also conceptually unhappy, i.e., it purports to make a factual statement but we have no idea of what, if anything, could count for or against its truth or falsity. Some theologians with an antimetaphysical bias would try to avoid treating (3), (4) or (5) as part of the corpus of Judaism or Christianity. If my argument has been correct, this is indeed an inadequate and evasive defense against skeptical criticism, but allowing it for the sake of the discussion and returning to (1) and (2), which are surely part of that corpus, with respect to those utterances, we still have overwhelming conceptual difficulties. Consider (2) "God is the God of mercy of Whose forgiveness I stand in need." This statement entails the further statement that God does or can do something, that God acts or can act in a certain way, for it is utterly senseless to speak of being merciful if one could not even in principle act, do or fail to do merciful acts. To recognize and accept this is not to be committed to reductionism or materialism. One might even argue, as Strawson does, that the concept of a person is a primitive notion not fully analyzable in behavioristic terms, but it does not follow from this that there can be "bodiless action," that we can understand what it would be like for a person to do something without making at least a tacit reference to his body, to a living, moving being with a spatio-temporal location. But God in developed Judeo-Christianity is supposed to be conceptualized as Pure Spirit. At the very least, He cannot be taken to be a reality with a body or as something with a spatio-temporal location. God

is not a being existing in space. Some theologians have even wanted to deny that God is o being at all. Rather He is Being, but Being or a being, it is certainly evident that God is not conceptualized as a being existing in space. As the above arguments make clear, only something with a body could act, could do something, and thus trivially could act mercifully or fail to act mercifully. But if it is logically impossible for X to act or fail to act mercifully then it is also logically impossible for X to be merciful or fail to be merciful. Thus (2), a key bit of God-talk, is also seen to be an incoherent utterance. To arguments of this sort it has been replied: Theists .. . are not people who misconceive action in applying it to God; they are simply people who employ this concept of action or agency in contexts where the nontheistic, or nonreligious do not. Which is to say no more than that they believe in God, while others do not. It is certainly not to say that their employment of the concept must be nonsensical.7 What is the argument for this? It is pointed out (1) that the language of action is logically distinct from that of bodily movement and that agency is logically distinct from spatio-temporal causation, (2) that there is no sharp distinction between the agent's body and the rest of his physical situation, and (3) that God is an agent without being a person. 1 think all three of these claims are quite questionable to say the least. But even if we accept them, the argument can still be seen to be defective. Consider how the argument runs: no matter how detailed our account of bodily movement, alternative descriptions of what an agent did would still always be possible. If my fist bangs against Jones's jaw in the water, this is quite compatible with any of the following three action descriptions (descriptions which in turn are arbitrarily selected from an indefinitely large number of apposite action descriptions of that bodily motion): I was trying to save his life, I was paying him back for an injury, I was trying to kill him. The conclusion which is drawn is that "an account of what is going on in terms of bodily movement, i.e., of spatio-temporal events causally connected, never tells us what the agent is doing." But the acceptance of this argument does nothing at all to show that someone could possibly do anything without making bodily movements or without having a body. But this is what must be shown. A similar thing holds for both the claim that causal talk is not applicable to the language of agency and for the claim that no sharp distinction can be made between the agent and his physical environment These claims might be accepted and it would still do nothing at all to show that it makes sense to say "action A occurred but nobody or nothing did it " To say "That was a merciful action," implies that some agent acted, but even though agency is hard to isolate from the rest of its physical situation and even if we cannot properly speak of the cause of an action, still typically an agent is a person and there can be no identifying a person and hence an agent except by reference to their bodies. A necessary condition for understanding the concept of action is the understanding of bodily movement However, in trying to resist such a conclusion it has been argued that God is not a person. We indeed, so the argument runs, cannot conceive of a person without a body, but we can, though characteristically we do not, think of agency without some idea of a bodily movement being involved. God, we are told, is to be thought of as an agent without a body; this "bodiless agent" acts without a body; he does merciful things without a body. I would counter that even when using a term such as "chemical agent"—where we refer to an active force or substance producing an effect—there is still a physically specifiable something which reacts in a determinate physically specifiable way. We have no idea of what it would be like for something to be done, for something to do something, for an action to occur, without there being a body in motion. In this connection we need to consider again "God is the God of mercy" ("God is love" would work as

well); this means He (it) is conceived of as doing something or being able to do something, but we can only understand the doing of something if there is something identifiable which is said to do it. Moreover, X is only identifiable as an agent, and thus X can only be intelligibly said to be an agent if X has a body. For agency to be logically possible, we must have a discrete something specifiable in spatio-temporal terms. But the transcendent God of Judaism and Christianity is thought to be a wholly independent reality, wholly other than the world which is utterly dependent on this "ultimate reality" and is said to be ultimately unintelligible without reference to this nonphysical mysterium tremendum et fascinans. But then it is senseless to speak, as Jews and Christians do, of God as the God of mercy of Whose forgiveness man stands in need. Yet if this is so, it would appear to be the case that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are incoherent Weltanschauungen.

V

A standard ploy at this moment in the dialectic is to maintain that utterances like "God is all merciful," "God is the Creator of the heav- ens and the earth" or "God loves all His creation," are symbolic or metaphorical utterances which manifest the Ultimate or Uncondi- tioned Transcendent but are themselves not literal statements which could be true or false. They hint at an ineffable metaphysical ultimate which is, as Tillich put it, "unconditionally beyond the conceptual sphere. The only thing nonsymbolic we can say about God is: (6) God is being-itself, the ineffable ultimate. (7) God is the Unconditioned Transcendent on which everything else is dependent. On the remarkable assumption that such verbosities are helpful explications, some theologians, addicted to this obscure manner of speaking, have gone on to make remarks like (8) or (9). (8) Being-itself is not another being but the transcendens or the comprehensive, the incomparable and wholly other source and unity of all beings. (9) God is not a being, but Being-itself that wider Being within which all particular beings have their being. Here "Being"—as well as "Being-itself in (6)—purportedly functions as a name or some other referring expression; that is to say, as a word which supposedly denotes or stands for something. But to do this, that is, to function descriptively or designatively, "being" and "being-itself' must have an intelligible opposite. But in the above sentences it has no intelligible opposite. When we use "being," "being-itself," or "being-assuch," in sentences like (6) through (9) we are trying to catch the cognitive import of "God." We are trying to say that there is a realm of being as such over and above the being of individual objects. (The sense of "over and above" remains problematic. It is not a spatial sense, of course, but in what way it is "over and above" remains utterly mysterious.) Such being is said to be neither a genus nor a property. But then we can scarcely avoid severe philosophical perplexity concerning its character and how, if at all, being is to be identified. To discover this, we would have to discover what it is not; we would have to discover its intelligible opposite; yet the opposite of "being" is "nothing." But "nothing," in ordinary discourse, does not function as a name or some other referring expression and if we try to regiment discourse and make "nothing" function as a referring expression then we are led to the absurdities that Lewis Carroll satirized in Through the Looking Glass when the Red King thought that if Nobody passed the messenger on the road then Nobody would have arrived first. To try to treat "nothing" as a name or referring expression is to get involved in the absurdity of asking what kind of a something, what kind of a being or what kind of being is nothing. It involves the incoherent reifying of nothing into a kind of opposed power to

being and, at the same time, spoiling its supposed contrast with "being" by treating "nothing" as the name of a mysterious something, which makes it either identi- cal with Being-itself or a being which has its being in Being. In either case we have an absurdity. But unless "Nothing" is treated as a referring expression, "Being," where we try to construe it as a referring expression, has no intelligible opposite and without an intelligible opposite "Being" lacks descriptive or designative significance and thus it is not, after all, as the Being-talk-man requires, a referring question. Superficially it appears to have that role but actually has no such use in the language. For (6), (8) or (9) to come off as intelligible factual assertions, "being" and "being-itself must be genuine referring ex* pressions with intelligible opposites. Unfortunately, for the theologian committed to such an approach, these expressions do not so function, and thus our sample sentences are not sentences with which we can make factual statements. Basically the same difficulties apply to the terms in the above sentences which presumably are taken to be elucidations of "beingitself or "being-as-such" by people who like to talk in this obscure and, I suspect, obscurantist manner. Consider such phrases as "ineffable ultimate," "Unconditioned Transcendent," "transcendens," or "the Comprehensive." They are not ordinary language expressions with fixed uses; that is, in order to try to understand them we must be given some coherent directions concerning their use. But we are hardly given any directions here. Presumably they are putative referring expressions, but how even in principle could we identify their referents? A says "There really is the Comprehensive" and B replies "It's a myth, there is no such reality." C wonders whether there really is an Unconditioned Transcendent, the transcendens or an ineffable ultimate and D reassures him that actually there are no such realities. Actually those who are hip on Being-talk never take such a matter-of-fact tone, but even if they did, it is evident that there is not only no way at all of deciding who is right, where such matter-of-fact-soimdm# questions are raised, but there is also no way of deciding which putative factual claim is the more probable. Nothing that we could experience now or hereafter, even assuming the intelligibility of "hereafter," helps us out vis-a-vis such "questions." But what then are we talking about if we try to question, affirm or deny that there really is an Unconditioned Transcendent? If, as it certainly seems to be, it is impossible to give an answer, then "being-talk" is only a less familiar and less evocative species of incoherence than God-talk. At this point we are likely to hear talk about ineffability. To be so analytic, it will be contended, is appropriate to an examination of scientific discourse, but it is not appropriate to religious discourse. Such an analytic approach, it will be proclaimed in certain circles, ignores the existential dimension of man. Suffering from cultural lag, such an analytic approach, still too much in the temper of positivism, fails to take to heart man's existential encounter with Being, when the dread of non-being gives him a sense, scarcely characterizable in words, of his "total existence." Being-talk may indeed be so paradoxical as to be scarcely intelligible, but such concrete human experiences do lead to a confrontation with Being. And being-itself is indeed the Ineffable: that which is beyond all conceptualization. In our despair and estrange- ment we are led to an ineffable but supremely Holy something which can be experienced in a compelling manner but it can never be more than obliquely and metaphorically hinted at in words, symbols, and images. To gain insight here, we need to transcend our pedestrian literalness and acknowledge that there are some things which are literally unsayable or inexpressible but are nonetheless given in those experiences of depth where human beings must confront their own existence. What is involved here is the claim that there are "ineffable truths" which cannot be put into words; religious truths—so the argument

runs—are species of that genus. People with the proper experience and attitudes understand them; that is, they in a sense understand the concept of God, but what they know to be true cannot in any way be literally expressed. Our samples of being-talk haltingly and falteringly suggest these truths; they can awake in us the experience of such "ineffable truths" but they do not make true or false statements themselves. Instead they function evocatively to give rise to such experiences or expressively to suggest what cannot be literally stated. Given the proper experience, the reality they obliquely attest to will, while remaining irreducibly mysterious, be humanely speaking undeniable. Such doctrines of the Ineffable are incoherent and will not enable us to meet or resolve religious quandaries legitimately. To hold such a doctrine is to be committed to the thesis that, though there may be something appropriately called "God," "Being-itself or "the Uncondi- tioned Transcendent," in reality nothing literal, or at least nothing affirmative, can be said about God. That is to say, no sentences about God or sentences in which "God" occurs literally express a fact or make a true or false assertion. Thus, on such a reading of God-talk, "The world is dependent on God" or any other God-sentence cannot literally make a true or false statement, assert something that is so or is not so, though such sentences are not without sense for they have a metaphorical or symbolic use. But if an utterance P is metaphorical, this entails that it is logically possible for there to be some literal statement G which has the same conceptual content. "Metaphorical," or for that matter "symbolic" or "analogical," gets its meaning by being contrastable with "literal." There can be no intelligible metaphorical or symbolic or analogical God-talk if there can be no literal God-talk. Thus the ineffability thesis is internally incoherent. However, it might be replied that the above argument does not touch the most fundamental core of the ineffability thesis, namely, that the man of faith can know what he means by "God" though he cannot, literally or even obliquely, say what he means and what he means cannot in any way be expressed, even if it is given in an ecstatic encounter or confrontation with Being or an Unconditioned Transcendent. The latter part of this is nonsense, for, as I have already pointed out, a reality transcendent to the universe could not be encountered or confronted; only some being in the world could, logically could, be encountered or confronted. We arc however, still on slightly peripheral ground, for the major claim in the ineffability thesis is that one can know what P means even though P cannot even in principle be expressed or publicly exhibited. One can know that there is a God though the concept of God is inexpressible and our talk of God is nonsensical. What makes this maneuver seem more plausible than it actually is, is its easy confusion with the rather ordinary experience of knowing very well what something is (say a bird one sees) and yet being at that time quite unable to say what it is. One looks at the bird and recog- nizes it but one cannot remember its name. In this context we should also call to mind that we have a whole range of "Aha!-experiences." But the ineffability thesis under examination maintains something far more radical than would be encompassed by a theory which took into account, as it indeed should take into account, the above straightforwardly empirical phenomena. The ineffability thesis commits one to the belief that there are things one can know which are in principle impossible, that is, logically impossible, to express or to exhibit in any system of notation. In this way "a true religious statement" or "an expressed religious truth" would be self-contradictory. It is tempting to take the short way with such a thesis and reject it on the following grounds: (1) If one knows P then P is true, since "I know it but it isn't true" is a contradiction. Thus, since only statements are literally true, there could be no inexpressible knowledge. (2) Reflection on "means" also establishes that there could be no such "ineffable

understanding." For something to have a meaning or to have meaning, it must have a use in a language or in some system of notation. This partially specifies what it means for something to have a meaning or have meaning even when we speak of the meaning of a concept, for we use "concept" to signify what is expressed by synonymous expressions in the same or different languages or systems of notation. But only if something has meaning or has a meaning can we understand what it means, so we cannot understand something which is inexpressible in principle; there would be nothing to be understood, for there would be nothing that is meaningful. However, some might think, mistakenly I believe, that some of these premises make unjustified and question-begging assumptions. Rather than extending my argument for them here or entering into complicated questions about so-called "private languages" and the like, I shall see if there are still simpler considerations that can probably be utilized to refute or render implausible the ineffability thesis. (Keep in mind that the job of challenging premises can always go on and on; the most we can hope for in philosophy is to give from the alternatives available the most plausible perspicacious representation of the conceptual area in question.) First, take note of the platitude that if you know something that is literally in principle unsayable, inexpressible, incapable of being shown or in any way exhibited, then there trivially can be no communicating it. You cannot justifiably say it is God you experience, know, encounter, love or commit yourself to in utter trust; you, on your own thesis, cannot significantly say that if you do such and such and have such and such experiences, you will come to know God or come to be grasped by God. "What is unsayable is unsayable," is a significant tautology. Only if one could at least obliquely or metaphorically express one's experience of the Divine could one's God-talk have any significance, but on the present radical ineffability thesis even the possibility of obliquely expressing one's knowledge or belief is ruled out. So, given such a thesis, there could be no confessional community or circle of faith; in fine, the thesis is reduced to the absurd by making it impossible for those who accept such a thesis to acknowledge the manifest truth that the Judeo-Christian religion is a social reality. On this simple consideration alone, we should surely rule out the ineffability thesis. Thus Dom IUyd Tretho- wan is wide of the mark when he remarks: "Flew and Nielsen... are asking for a description of God. And the believer, again if he knows his business will reply .. . that God cannot be described. God is the Other. If we try to take this claim of Trethowan's literally, then the word "God" is surely not just the vehicle for an incoherent concept, but "God" is meaningless for we cannot even say that something is if it is indescribable. What is indescribable is also unintelligible.

Three reminders here: (1) In asserting that nonanthropomorphic concepts of God are incoherent and according to some theological construals of "God" even meaningless, I am not merely giving you to understand that skeptics (atheists and agnostics) do not understand God-talk. Rather, I have been contending that, the believer's beliefs about his beliefs notwithstanding, the concept of God in developed Judaism and Christianity is an incoherent one and neither believer nor nonbeliever understands what they are talking about when they talk about God or attempt to talk to God. I am not simply urging that the believer make his beliefs meaningful to the skeptic, I am asking that he show how God-talk is a coherent form of language, period.

(2) I do not accept either the Wittgensteinian assumption that every form of discourse is all right as it is and that the only thing that could be out of order is the philosophical talk about the talk or the further and related Wittgensteinian claim that philosophy can only relevantly display the forms

of life and not relevantly criticize them or assess them. Not only God-talk but also Witch-talk and talk of fairies have their own distinctive uses and even within our culture once constituted a discourse and were embedded in a form of life. But all the same such forms of life were open to criticism and came gradually to be discredited as they were recognized to be incoherent. Indeed in many cases first-order discourse and the beliefs embedded in them are beyond philosophical reproach and it is merely the characterization, the second-order discourse, that is troublesome. Thus if someone tells you that you never see tables or chairs and that you do not have a mind, that is a bad joke, but if someone tells you that you do not have a soul, you just think you do, it may very well engender a live dispute or a live worry if you are a traditional Christian. Where God-talk is involved, both the first-order- and the second-order discourse are problematical.

(3) The acceptance of even a thorough-going fideistic point of view will not protect the believer from my critique. If we understood what it meant to assert or deny "And God shall raise the quick and the dead" or "God is the creator of the Heavens and the earth," we might accept them humbly on faith. We might, out of our desperate need to make sense of our lives, accept them de fide. But we can only do that if we have some understanding of what they mean. If I ask you to believe in Irglig, you cannot believe in Irglig no matter how deep your need because you do not know what to take on faith (on trust). Faith presupposes a minimal understanding of what you take on faith, and if my arguments are correct, we do not have that understanding of a nonanthropomorphic concept of God.

VI

It might be contended that I have so far ignored the major and most obvious objection to my procedure. I am, it is natural to say, being a philosophical Neanderthal, for my arguments rest too exclusively on verificationist principles and by now it is well known that the veri- fiability principle is plainly untenable. I, of course, agree that it is certainly plainly evident that it is not true that a sentence is meaningful only if it is verifiable. In fact, I would go further and claim that such a claim is itself incoherent. It is sentences, not statements, which are meaningful or meaningless and it is statements, not sentences, which are confirmable or infirmable, true or false. Questions of meaning are logically prior to questions of verification; in order to verify or confirm a statement we must already know what it means. Moreover, many sentences which are plainly meaningful, e.g., "Pass the butter," "Oh, if this agony would only end," "Will the weather change?" do not even purport to make statements, let alone statements of fact which are confirmable or infirmable. It is by now crystal clear that the verifiability principle will never do as a general criterion of meaningful discourse.18 There are two points, however, that should be made here: (1) it is less evident that some form of the verifiability criterion is not correct as a criterion of factual significance and (2) that many of my key arguments do not even depend on or presuppose such a criterion of factual significance. The second point alone is enough to free me from the charge that I am entangled in a thoroughly discredited "logical empiricist metaphysics" but I would like, in what I fear is too brief and too brusk a manner, to defend my first point, for it may seem obscurantist. Do we have, for the many and varied types of meaningful utter- ance, a criterion in virtue of which we can decide which of them are fact-stating? I maintain that we do, for a statement has factual content only if it is in principle testable or, to put it differently, for a sentence to function

in a discourse as a factual assertion, it must make a statement which it is logically possible to confirm or infirm. If anything can give us "some insight into the ultimate nature of things"—to utter a tantalizing obscurity—it will be factually informative statements, i.e., statements which give us knowledge of what isthe case. To have insight into "the ultimate nature of things" wouldbe at least to have some reliable beliefs about what in fact the universe is like. That is, we would gain some information about some very fundamental facts. I do not say this is all we would need but we would at least have to have that. But factually informative utterances must, in principle, be verifiable. To put the point more exactly, a statement has factual significance only if it is at least logically possible to indicate the conditions or set of conditions under which it could be to some degree confirmed or infirmed, i.e., that it is logically possible to state evidence for or against its truth. Certainly my claim here is a controversial one—a claim that many analytic philosophers would reject on the grounds that it blurs too many distinctions and relies on too many vague claims. I have already met some of the usual criticisms through the very specification of its actual scope. Beyond that, all I can do in the space available here is to use Hume's method of challenge and to ask you if you can think of a single unequivocally factual statement—a statement that all parties would agree had factual content—that is not in the sense specified above verifiable (confirmable or infirmable) in principle. If you cannot—and I do not think you can—is it not reasonable to believe that my demarcation line for a statement of fact is justified? Indeed this gauntlet has been taken up, but the most usual and sophisticated of the alleged counterexamples to my claim are of the following two sorts, neither of which seem to me genuine counterexamples: (1) "Every human being has some neurotic traits," and (2) "My head aches." As Hempel and Rynin have pointed out, statements of unrestricted generality with mixed quantification are not decisively confirmable or infirmable and we cannot even state a precise probability weight for their confirmation or disconfirmation. But this does not mean that in a weaker and less precise sense we could not give perfectly empirical evidence for or against their truth. Since language is not like a calculus, we should not continue to believe that it will function like one. If we continue to discover neurotic traits in all the people who are so examined and if some independently testable personality theory gives us reason to believe, say, that the very growing up in a family always leads to some neurotic stress, the generalization has some confirmation. On the other hand, if we find a human being who does not, so far as we can determine, behave neurotically at all, the generalization is slightly weakened. The same thing is true for other statements involving mixed quantification which might be plainly thought to have factual content, e.g., "Every substance has some solvent" or "Every planet has some form of life." "My head aches," or "I have a headache," poses different problems. From the period of The Blue Book on, Wittgenstein thought that such utterances do not have a verification. Malcolm points out that in his Philosophische Bemerkungen Wittgenstein thought that they could be verified, but after 1932 his recognition that they were avowals rather than statements of fact led to his "turning away from the fullblown verification theory of meaning." However, it is just this conception of avowals that is important for my case. I do not verify, "My head aches," or "I have a headache." After all, in normal circum- stances I, by my very utterance, simply avow that my head aches. I am not, Wittgenstein argued, trying to state a fact but to give expression to how I feel. If you reply—and I for one have considerable sympathy with that reply—that this is too extreme, for "head aches," in "My head aches," when uttered by Nielsen, has factual content, note that it has the same factual content as "Nielsen's head aches" and that this statement

is perfectly open to confirmation by what I say and do. What makes "Nielsen's head aches " true or false is exactly what makes "My head aches" true or false, where the utterer of this last utterance is Nielsen. So we still have no genuine example of a factual statement which is not verifiable. Either we drop the claim that "My head aches" is true or false, in which case no issue arises about it being a factual statement or about how we could come to know that it is so, or we allow it is true or false, in which case we come to know that it is true or false, that it is verified, in the same way that we come to know or verify that "Nielsen's head aches" is true or false. When I utter "My head aches" and Jones utters "Nielsen's head aches," both these claims are, to use a slightly outmoded and pleonastic terminology, intersubjectively verified in the same way to the extent they are verified or are known to be true or false at all. There are those who think that behind my talk of "factual signif- icance" and the verifiability principle there lurks a series of false dichotomies such as "factual meaning"/"emotive meaning," "cognitive meaning'V'metaphorical meaning," "literal meaning'V'nonliteral meaning" and the like. I do not think any such "multiplication of meanings beyond need," is involved in what I have argued, but for those who remain unconvinced and suffer from the anxieties described above, I want to stress that what is most essential to my argument about fact-stating discourse can be put in this way: If a sentence is used to make what is thought to be a factual statement and yet the statement made by its use is neither confirmable nor infirmable even in principle, then the statement in question actually fails to come off as a factual statement, i.e., it fails to assert a fact and thus is not a genuine bit of fact-stating discourse. An utterance that comes off as a statement of fact must be verifiable in principle. To sum up. Judaism and Christianity are thought by Jews and Christians to involve an entry into a relationship with a being tran- scendent to the world or at least with a creative and gracious "world ground" which is distinct from the world and upon which the world is dependent. Thus we face what for the Jew or Christian is an awkward fact, namely, that while being a Jew or Christian consists in much more than believing that certain allegedly factual statements are true, it does, in an utterly irreducible manner, involve the acceptance of what are taken by the faithful to be certain factual beliefs. And these purportedly factual beliefs are often of vast scope; they are not only ordinary empirical beliefs such as Jesus was born in Bethlehem. The expression of such "cosmic factual beliefs" results in the making of religious or, if you will, theological statements, e.g., "There is an infinite, eternal Creator of the world" or "There is an ultimate loving reality in which all men find their being," and these statements are taken by the faithful to be factual statements. Yet they are neither directly nor indirectly confirmable or infirmable even in principle and thus are in reality, as many nonbelievers have suspected, devoid of factual content. They purport to be factual but fail to behave as factual statements. We have no idea of how to establish their truth or probable truth, or their falsity or probable falsity. We have no con- ception of what it would be like for them to be true (or probably true) or false (or probably false). Yet they are supposedly expressive of factual beliefs. But such a statement which is in no way confirmable or infirmable even in principle is not a factual statement. To make sense of such utterances on their own terms, and not just the sense a Santayana or a Feuerbach would make of them, believers must believe that these key bits of God-talk are fact-stating, but these utterances fail to come off as bits of fact-stating discourse. So here we have at the very foundation of such faiths a radical incoherence which vitiates such religious claims. It might be countered that "Every human being is dependent on an infinite 'world ground' transcendent to the universe," is factually intelligible because it is after all weakly confirmable or

infirmable in a manner similar to the way "Every human being has some neurotic traits," is confirmable or infirmable. There is weak verification in each case. Feeling dependent and morally insufficient counts weakly for the truth of the putative theological assertion; making sense of one's life and of morality independent of any reference to religion and overcoming feelings of utter dependency counts against its truth. But this is deceiving, for atheists can, and some do, agree that human beings pervasively have these feelings of dependency and moral insufficiency and still these atheists can make nothing of nonanthropomorphic talk of God or an infinite "world ground" transcendent to the universe. The believer cannot legitimately respond that he is simply talking about such feelings and nothing more for then his belief would be indistinguishable from atheism. But it is his alleged "something more" that does not make a verifiable difference even in the weak sense. "God is wholly Other," is, taken by itself, nonsense for it is an incomplete sentence: in order to understand it, we need to know "a wholly other what." The alleged answer frequently comes by talk of "Being-in-itself," "Unconditioned Transcendent," "Being transcendent to the world" and the like, but, as we have seen, though they are purportedly referring expressions, no intelligible directions have been given as to how to identify the supposed referents of such referring expressions. The affirmation and denial that there are such "realities" is equally compatible with anything and everything that could conceivably be experienced. Such nonanthropomorphic God-talk does not make verifiable sense. In Such is my argument about God-talk. There are three morals I wish to draw from this, one religious and ideological and the other two about philosophical methodology. To put the religious or ideological point bluntly: If my central arguments are essentially correct, one should not be a Jew, Christian, Moslem or any kind of theist. To be any of these things involves having beliefs "whose scope transcends the empirical world." More specifically, it involves believing in the reality of God as a creator of the universe. But, if my arguments are near to their mark, such a belief is utterly incoherent. That is to say, with nonanthropomorphic conceptions of God there is nothing intelligible to be believed, so atheism (a reasoned rejection of belief in God) becomes the most reasonable form of life. If beliefs are persisted in where there are no reasons for holding them, we should look for the causes: look for what makes people believe as they do; belief in God is absurd, but, as Feuerbach, Santayana, and Freud have shown, the psychological need for this construct of the human heart is so great that in cultures like ours many people must believe in spite of the manifest absurdity of their belief. They can see and accept this absurdity in the religious beliefs of other tribes and sometimes, as with Hamann and Kierkegaard, they can partially see it and accept it in their own tribe, but the acceptance is not unequivocal and the full absurdity of their own belief remains hidden from them. There are multiple confusions here. I am philosophically conservative enough to believe, Searle and Black to the contrary notwith- standing, that categorical normative conclusions are not entailed by any set of purely non-normative premises. But even if I am right about this and there is such an is/ought divide, it does not at all follow that normative claims are not supported or justified or at least weakened or strengthened by non-normative claims. After all, entailments are not the only conceptual connections. And this is all I am maintaining. In other words I am only maintaining that, if my arguments about the concept of God are accepted, it would be unreasonable for those who accept them to remain Jews, Christians or Moslems. Moreover, in such a circumstance it would be more reasonable to be an atheist than an agnostic. There are in such considerations crucial normative implications about how to live and die. The clickety-clack of linguistic analysis has

human implications. I want to turn for a moment to J.C. Murray's dichotomy for it is a false dichotomy. Atheism, like Christianity or any other way of life, does, of course, involve a normative stance, a option about how to live. But it is by no means a matter of the godless man of the academy or the marketplace simply willing or opting "to understand the world without God." Any way of acting which reflects deliberation involves the decision to act in a certain way; and to act deliberately in a certain way is part of what it is to live in accordance with norms. That is to say, my remarks here are conceptual remarks or what Wittgenstein, with a considerable stretch of "grammatical," called "grammatical remarks." Between men of God and atheists there is indeed the clash of affirmations. But it is not simply a clash of affirmations or even in the last analysis simply a clash of affirmations. Atheism involves a decision about how to live, but it also involves an intellectual understanding of what our world is like; and the decision to reject religious belief would not be made without a certain intellectual understanding of the situation. My concluding remarks about philosophical methodology are not unrelated to what I have just maintained. For anyone at all knowledgeable about philosophical analysis, for anyone touched by the work of Moore, Wittgenstein, and Austin, it is natural, when faced with my arguments, to assert that something must have gone wrong somewhere. Philosophical analysis is normatively and, if you will, ideologically or metaphysically neutral. It is tempting to maintain that when anyone claims to have drawn such vast ideological conclusions as I claim to have drawn form philosophcial analysis, you can be quite confident that he is unwittingly sneaking some nonanalytical element into his philosophical analysis—that somewhere, somehow some special pleading has occurred—for philosophical analyses are ideologically neutral. There is an ambiguity in the phrase "philosophical analysis is neutral" which once exposed will undermine this argument. Philosophical analysis is neutral in the sense that, independently of one's normative, ideological, or metaphysical view of the world, it either does or does not follow that to say X ought to do Y presupposes X can do Y, or to say that X knows God is to give one to understand that X loves God, or to say that X believes in God presupposes that X believes that God exists. These relationships are logical or conceptual, and they either hold or fail to hold, and what in this way holds or fails to hold here is not a factor of one's ideological commitments. In this important sense philosophical analysis is ideologically neutral. If this were not so, philosophical dispute would degenerate into a clash of rival unarguable affirmations. In a very important sense it would cease being philosophical and philosophy would itself be impossible. However, there is another sense in which philosophical analysis is not normatively or ideologically neutral. In carrying out a philosophical analysis, we attempt, through a description of the uses and the unscheduled inferences of philosophically perplexing terms and utter- ances, to gain a perspicuous representation of the discourse in ques- tion. If, after a careful analysis of "can," one concluded that "I can," in moral contexts typically and irreducibly functioned categorically and that these uses of discourse were essential to the understanding of human action, it would be unreasonable to be a soft determinist; if, after a careful analysis of "good," "right," and "ought" in moral contexts, it became apparent that "good" was never equivalent to any term or set of terms standing for purely empirical characteristics or relations, it would be unreasonable to be an ethical naturalist; similarly it would not be reasonable to remain a Jew or a Christian if careful elucidation of "God" and God-talk indicated that, while be- lievers took "God" to be a referring expression, "God" actually functions neither as a name nor as a definite or indefinite description and that there are no

directions in the discourse concerning how to identify God so that we could have some idea of what we are talking about when we speak of God. It is evident in such a situation vis-a-vis soft determinism, ethical naturalism, and theism, that certain results of philosophcial analysis indicate that a given ideological position is not tenable. In this respect philosophical analysis is not ideologically neutral. But if it were not philosophically neutral in the way I first characterized, analysis itself would be impossible and there could be no philosophically relevant grounds for accepting or rejecting any of these ideological positions. This leads me to my last point which is a general one about the nature of philosophy. It is tempting to remark that in proceeding as I have in this essay, I have been trying to do something that cannot be done: I have in effect tried to give philosophy a task which cannot be its own; I have implicitly described what activities, what forms of life, are legitimate or rational and what usages, reflecting these forms of life, are coherent, when in actuality philosophy can only legitimately clearly display the actual structure of the discourse embedded in these activities. Again we are back to a very Wittgensteinian point. The claim is that the philosopher's sole legitimate function is to describe our discourse so as to dispel conceptual perplexities engendered by a failure properly to understand the workings of our language. Certainly such a Wittgensteinian stress is an understandable and justified reaction to the kind of prescriptivism which would persuasively redefine "knowledge," "proof," "explanation," "evidence," and the like in such a way that most of the things commonly called such are not real knowledge, proof, explanation, evidence and the like. Moore, Wittgenstein, and ordinary language philosophers have amply demonstrated the barrenness of such philosophical rationalism. But such a descriptivism can throw out the baby with the bath and utterly lose one of the deepest rationales for doing philosophy, namely, that of criticizing received opinions and more generally and uniquely of providing a critical discussion of critical discussions and forms of life. These are grand old phrases, it might be replied, but they remain empty: what exactly is this critical discussion of critical discussions and what Archimedean point can the philosopher possibly attain which would enable him legitimately to criticize whole forms of life? The very concept of rationality is itself a deeply contested and contextdependent concept. In considering this, let us start with one of the less contested points first. "Rational" and "rationality" are indeed used eulogistic- ally, but we should be aware of concluding that they are just emotive labels or that they are so essentially contested as to be thoroughly subjective. Translation into the concrete should make this evident, though it will not, of course, provide us with an elucidation of the concept of rationality. A man who never listens to others and always shouts others down is not rational; it is also irrational to persist in a practice which gives rise to vast human suffering when this could be avoided by adopting another practice that would achieve much the same thing as the first practice but would cause much less suffering; finally, to point to a specific kind of behavior, to believe in witches or fairies is also irrational if one is a tolerably well-informed Westerner living in the twentieth century. "Rational," whatever its precise anal- ysis, is not so vague that it does not have an established use and evident paradigm cases. Moreover, activities or forms of life are not neatly isolated activities with their own distinctive criteria. There is, for example, no such thing as "religious language," though there are religious discourses carried on in English, Swedish, German, French, etc. And even in these discourses the criteria of relevance, the use of "evidence," "rationality," and the like are not utterly unique to the discourse in question. It is just not so that God-talk is a self-contained form of language or form of life, though it does have its distinctive

topics and centers of interest. The very criticisms I have made of religious beliefs, if they are on the whole correct, constitute a reductio of the Wittgensteinian thesis that philosophy can only be descriptive. To this it might be replied that since philosophy can only be descriptive there must be something basically wrong with my arguments about religious belief. Forms of life are immune from anything but piecemeal criticism; there can be no incoherent forms of language or irrational forms of life. But re- membering the very different things that philosophy has been throughout its long history, and keeping in mind the immense variety of types of investigation that have gone on under the name of "phi- losophy," and the precariousness and contested nature of generali- zations about the nature of philosophy, is it not—I put it to your reflective consideration—more reasonable to doubt the descriptivist thesis as a completely adequate account of the proper office of phi- losophy, than to reject my arguments simply on the grounds that they fail to square with a thesis in the philosophy of philosophy? Wittgenstein generalized primarily from reflecting on epistemology, the philosophy of mind, and mathematics. There his descriptivist the- sis seems to me thoroughly plausible; but he may, to turn his own phrase against him, have suffered from a one-sided diet. Religion is a form of life that may indeed be given, but it is still not beyond the pale of relevant philosophcial criticism. This essay might have been entitled "A refutation of Theism" or "A Refutation of Judeo-Christianity." Until and unless specific arguments can be provided to show that my criticisms fail, it is more reasonable to accept them and reject such a form of life than to maintain, on the basis of a general and disputed thesis in the philosophy of philosophy, that such arguments must be mistaken. Even if some—or worse still all—of my criticisms fail, unless criticisms of such a general type can be shown to be irrelevant, there is no reason to assume that the de- scriptivist thesis must be so and that "A Philosophical Refutation of Theism" is a conceptual anomaly. I admit that the concept of such a type of critical assessment (a "criticism of criticisms" or "a critical discussion of forms of life and of critical discussion") is itself a disputed concept expressive of a con- troversial thesis in the philosophy of philosophy and that it is in need of a careful elucidation and defense. But ambulando what I have done here vis-a-vis religion and what Ronald Hepburn did in Christianity and Paradox and Antony Flew did in God and Philosophy are examples of what I have in mind. We have learned from Moore and Ryle that we can typically do with words what we may not in fact be able on demand to characterize adequately. It is also well known that "What is philosophy?" is itself a deeply contested philosophical problem and many men—past and present— who considered themselves philosophers and who are generally con- sidered philosophers have thought they could provide disciplined, rational criticism of ways-of-life. Moreover, they thought they were doing this in the course of philosophizing and not as an activity that was ancillary to their philosophizing. I have tried to do just that for a family of ways-of-life, namely, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, by exhibiting the incoherence of absolutely central beliefs they hold in common. Most of my arguments are fairly specific exercises in philosophical analysis. Unless they and arguments like them fail, we have good grounds for believing that it is not the case that philosophy properly done must always be purely descriptive. So my exercise gives rise to two important general claims: it challenges Judeo-Christian belief at its very heart and it also challenges a fashionable thesis about the nature of philosophy. One final salvo of I hope not too homiletic a nature. People who try to apply the techniques of linguistic analysis are still frequently accused of engaging in trivial endeavors and with what has been called "an abdication of philosophy." But note this: whatever

else may be wrong with what I have argued here, it remains one example of analytic philosophy that cannot be so criticized. What the critic must do is to show that my arguments are mistaken and not complain that they are trivial because they do not touch fundamental problems of human existence.

The Embeddedness of Atheism

Things are difficult nowadays for both the simple believer and the simple atheist. If they are at all reflective, they are going to be perplexed when arguments about religion are encountered. Let me show how it might go with a simple atheist (since he is closer to my heart) but I could have started with the simple believer just as well and have drawn rather similar conclusions though by a rather different route. (I am not implying that the simple believer or the simple atheist is simple-minded, though he is likely to be either innocent of or dismissive about the intricacies of philosophical theology and the philosophy of religion.) Let our simple atheist happen on some philosophy: Suppose he is directed by some well-meaning atheist friends to read the defenses of atheism given by two no-nonsense, tough-minded atheistic, analytical philosophers, N. R. Hanson and Michael Scriven. In reading them and reflecting on his reading, he comes to face the following core set of considerations. There is a fairly widespread, though utterly uncritical, belief that there is rough epistemic parity between theism and atheism. Hanson and Scriven rightly challenge this belief, which seems to be a comfort to some. Suppose a person tries to be an agnostic or fideist and claims that there is no positive evidence or any other epistemic ground for thinking that there is a God, or for that matter, for thinking there is not. That surely is, on the face of it at least, a not unreasonable position. None of the classical arguments for the existence of God are sound arguments and, after years and years of intense discussion, no new plausible candidates are in sight. There is no empirical evidence for the existence of God, and this means that there is no evidence for the existence of God, since "empirical evidence" is pleonastic and claims of direct acquaintance with God—to have encountered God—make no sense, for the God of developed theism is not, like an utterly anthropomorphic deity, the sort of reality you could bump into and get acquainted with. After all, this putative reality is said to be an infinite person without body and to be, as well, while remaining a person, transcendent to the world. Given such an arcane, utterly mysterious putative reality—a nonmysterious God would not be the God of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam—it would indeed be surprising if we could prove that there is such a reality. Attempted ontological disproofs of the existence of God are not as common as attempted ontological proofs but they have fared no better. Some conceptualizations of God might very well be shown to be inconsistent, but to show that the very concept of God itself (as distinct from certain conceptualizations of God) is inconsistent, as distinct from being problematic, would take some showing. And while we do not have any evidence for the existence of God, it is also the case that, given the kind of putative reality God is, we also do not understand what it would be like to have evidence for His existence or to have an "evidential awareness" or an experiential awareness of God. Given this, some might conclude, we can hardly speak of having good evidence that God does not exist. So it is often concluded that, at least cognitively speaking, agnosticism is the name of the game. It is here where Hanson and Scriven enter on the atheist side with what looks to the simple atheist to be just plain good sense, though a nice philosophically sanitized version. According to Hanson, we can- not be in such a circumstance of epistemic parity where there is no good reason for believing one way or

another, for, where we are making positive existence claims (as we most surely appear to be when we assert that there is a God), then "When there is no good reason for thinking a claim to be true, that in itself is good reason for thinking the claim to be false." Where what we are talking about are positive existence claims—propositions that assert the existence of some object—"a 'proof,' " as Hanson puts it, "of X's nonexistence usually derives from the fact that there is no good reason for supposing that X does exist." Scriven, in a way that should bring joy to the heart of the simple atheist, draws the following conclusion from this: "The proper alternative, when there is no evidence, is not mere suspension of belief; it is disbelief." "Atheism," Scriven tells us, "is obligatory in the absence of any evidence for God's existence." A little translation into the concrete might help. I am sitting here in my study and I am relatively sober. Suppose someone tells me that there is a thousand dollars in my wallet, which is lying in the top drawer of my desk. I open my drawer with the chap standing there and we take a good look, but I only find a ten dollar bill. I have, in the relevant sense of "proof" here, disproved the claim that I have a thousand dollars in my wallet. Perhaps as soon as I close the drawer the thousand dollars will pop into existence or pop back into existence in my wallet only to disappear as soon as I open my drawer; but that and a myriad of other logical possibilities or putative logical possibilities notwithstanding, I have no good reason here for thinking there is a thousand dollars in my wallet, and that fact in itself is, in such circumstances, tantamount to a proof that there is not a thousand dollars in my wallet. Or suppose someone tells me there is a Siberian wolf hound in my study. I don't see him or hear him barking or scratching nor do I smell him. My friend and I look around in the closets, behind the desk, and under the rug and the like. In such a circumstance agnosticism about there being such a dog in my study is not the proper stance. We are surely entitled to conclude, after such an examination, that there is no Siberian wolf hound in my study. This is how we do proceed in such a circumstance and we would conclude (and rightly so) that we had conclusively disproved that, then and there, there was a Siberian wolfhound in my study. There is no good reason to believe, Hanson and Scriven conclude, that things stand differently with God. After all "There is a God" is also a positive existence claim. Reading all this, the simple atheist is reassured. He always thought there was something specious and evasive about agnosticism. Now he sees why. And he is doubly reassured in finding philosophers deploying good sturdy common sense without any philosophical hat tricks. Moreover, it is comforting for him to know that the absence of any evidence or any other positive epistemic grounds for there being a God will provide a decisive ground for atheism. Things are not as much up in the air, he now sees, as the traditional received opinion (at least among the literate) had led him to believe. However, a philosophical friend tells him that unfortunately things are not quite that simple. There is a strange Christian chap around, Alvin Plantinga, who is a kind of reincarnation in this modem age of St. Anselm with some modal logic. This chap, his philos- opher friend tells him, has a nifty argument against the HansonScriven position. It goes something like this: Consider the proposition "There is at least one human being who was not created by God"—a strange positive existence claim but all the same something that looks like such a claim. (It has that surface grammar.) Now, given the way statistically normal Christians talk, it is a necessary truth that if God exists He has created all the human beings there are. Since this is so then any evidence for the truth of the proposition that there is at least one human being who was not created by God will also have to contain an argument, Plantinga tells us, that there is no God. However, what if there is no good arugment against God's existence?

Then, if that is so, we will have no good argument for "There was at least one human being who was not created by God." But then, given the Hanson-Scriven thesis, if we are going to be through and through rational, we must accept the proposition that all human beings are created by God. But that surely is not a conclusion to which Hanson and Scriven would like to be driven. However, their troubles do not stop there. Plantinga asks us now to suppose that there is no good argument for God's existence, something that Hanson and Scriven do indeed firmly believe. But then, when considering the proposition "There is a God," we are obliged, given the Hanson-Scriven thesis, to come to believe there is no God. But then, Plantinga continues, assuming that there are no good arguments for or against the existence of God, we are forced, if we accept the Hanson-Scriven thesis, to the conclusion that there is no God and all human beings were created by God. Faced with this reductio of the Hanson-Scriven thesis, the simple atheist is understandably both disheartened and perplexed. He thought, or at least hoped, the sturdy common sense of Hanson and Scriven would reinforce his considered judgments about the rationality of believing in God by giving him a sound philosophical rationale for his atheism. (It is analogous to faith in search of understanding.) But now it seems that Hanson and Scriven have led him down the garden path. But he also, since he is a sensible fellow, remains incredulous. Plantinga's argument has at least the smell of being valid but it also has the look of being the kind of hat trick that the simple atheist, from the sad experience of a philosophy course during his undergraduate days, has come to expect from philosophers. (He remembers with a sense of its appropriateness Hobbes's remark that there is nothing so absurd that some philosopher has not said it.) He had been pleasantly surprised in not finding Hanson and Scriven engaging in such philosophical antics. But now he is back in the soup. Still, he asks himself, what is wrong with Plantinga's argument? There must be something wrong, he suspects, if we end up deriving such absurdities form such a plausibility. Perhaps the exact way the Hanson-Scriven thesis is stated should be fiddled with or perhaps Plantinga makes some question-begging assumption. Surely, given the conclusion, it is natural enough to suspect something like that. The simple atheist is likely to think, as his counterpart the simple believer is likely to think in analogous situations, that he should have stayed clear of philosophy in the first place. He should have followed his initial hunches after his philosophy course. Still he remains puzzled and slightly ill at ease. Being a reasonable chap, he cannot just shrug off an argument that seems at least to be tightly constructed. But God is good and a Christian philosopher comes to his rescue. Thomas Morris, in the course of a fine article on Pascal's wager, argues that Plantinga does indeed beg the question. In making his argument Plantinga assumes that there are no good arguments for or against the existence of God. But to make that assumption—an as- sumption he needs to make for his argument to go through—he does quite plainly beg the question against Hanson and Scriven, for on their thesis the proposition that Plantinga just assumes could never be true. The absence of any good argument for the existence of God would just itself provide us with a good argument against the existence of God. However, Morris takes away with his right hand what he gives with his left, and here he does not do so by playing hat tricks (en- gaging in eristic if you want to be pedantic), but extends, for non- atheistic purposes, the sturdy common sense that the simple atheist had come to appreciate in Hanson and Scriven. Morris notes an important problem about the scope of the Hanson- Scriven principle. The kinds of situations where the Hanson-Scriven principle squares well with our intuitions are those—as in my homely examples above—in which the person claims that, since he has no evidence for the truth of the proposition,

he is then justified in denying that the proposition is true, are those situations, and only those in which he (a) rationally believes (where he is justified in believing) he is in a good epistemic position relative to the propositon he is denying and (b) where, in spite of being in this position, he in fact is in possession of no good evidence or any other epistemic ground for thinking the proposition in question is true. (To be in a good epistemic position to the proposition in question, the proposition must be such that if it were true, there would be positive epistemic considerations indicating or manifesting its truth.) Only where that is the situation is a person justified in believing that when there is no good reason for thinking a proposition to be true that that in itself is good reason for thinking the proposition to be false. If it is true that there is a Siberian wolf hound in my study, then there would be—to put it in pedantic philosophical jargon—positive epistemic considerations pointing to the truth of that proposition. If I am sitting in my study under good lighting conditions, I am reasonably rational, possess good sight and hearing, and am cold sober, then I am in a very good epistemic position to possess such evidence. Where I am in that position, and only where I am in that position, am I therefore justified in taking it that where there is no good reason for thinking a claim to be true, that in itself is a good reason for thinking it to be false. I am in that position with respect to the thousand dollars and to the Siberian wolf hound, but I am not in that position with respect to a transcendent mysterious God. Here I am a token of the type which is humankind. For Siberian wolf hounds and the like, and then only under certain conditions, the Hanson-Scriven argument goes through, but it does not go through for belief in God. The simple atheist has come to see that one initially attractive way to provide a rational ground for his atheism will not work. It is a short cut and short cuts, when it comes to assessing a pervasive belief-system that is so old and has been so extensively examined, start out, and quite rightly so, by being suspect. There is, in other words, a presumption against them. That the Hanson-Scriven tack should flounder, no matter how reasonable it sounds, should not be such a surprise to the simple atheist. On the other side, there is a similar moral to be learned by the simple believer about Christian philosophical one-liners. A Christian philosopher who has a short and snappy way with religious skepticism is not to be trusted. Philosophi- cal skepticism—the creation of some metaphysicians and epistemologists—is another matter. That is hardly an old and firmly embedded belief. However, the simple atheist still has intact what may have driven him in the direction of Hanson and Scriven in the first place. The philosophical situation vis-a-vis theistic religions looks like this. No one has been able to give a sound ontological proof or disproof of the existence of God, no cosmological or design-type arguments have been shown to be sound, and no other attempts to infer the existence of God from either evident or not-so-evident empirical facts (if that is not a pleonasm) have worked. The idea of seeing God or directly knowing or encountering God seems at least to be incoherent, and even if we assume coherence here there seems at least to be no reason to believe that anyone has actually seen, directly known—as in knowledge by acquaintance—ox encountered God. Hovering over all this, and perhaps explaining but at least complicating the above considerations, is the fact that the concept of God, at least in developed Judaeo-Christian-Islamic traditions, is a very problematic concept, in a way that the concept of chair, dog, or even electron, is not. It is a necessary truth, for those who play Christian language games, that God is mysterious. It may even be a necessary truth that He is the Ultimate Mystery (whatever that means). Reflective believers, on the one hand, will acknowledge that anything that would count as the Christian God must be mysterious and, while continuing to trust in God, they will be perplexed

about their central religious concept. They will recognize that the concept of God is in some way problematic. Many reflective skeptics (agnostics and atheists), on the other hand, will believe that what is to be taken to be "Ultimate Mystery" is in reality a disguised incoherence. So we know that our God-talk is not unproblematic; the question is whether our God-talk is sufficiently coherent so that certain key religious utterances do indeed make genuine truth claims, without a watering-down of the belief-system, or becoming a gross anthropomorphism. We have a situation in which there is no evidence or other epistemic grounds for the existence of God, where it is not the case that, evidence or no evidence, one must believe in God to make sense of one's life or to make sense of morality. Moreover—and this is conceptually fundamental—the very concept of God is so problematic that its coherence is very much in doubt. In the teeth of all this—and sometimes even self-consciously so—there are plenty of knights of faith about and, as a sociological fact, in North America at least, and in spite of the intelligentsia, both Jewish and Christian belief-systems (often in very Neanderthal forms) are flourishing and the same holds for Islamic belief-systems in other parts of the world. Things, unfortunately, go that way in both Tehran and Dallas and, as well, in the ghettos of Jerusalem. Freud's expectations, rather than those of Engels seem, at least in the short run, to be winning out. We are not seeing the withering away of religious belief-systems. Indeed, even the most barbaric ones hang on and in some places flourish. Faced with such a situation, what kind of an attitude (if he has any choice in the matter) should the simple atheist and the simple believer have? We should also, in thinking about this, throw into the hopper the great diversity of religious belief-systems and with it, particularly given the situation as I have characterized it above, the question "How can I reasonably, in such a circumstance, believe that Christ is The Truth and The Way?" I think the simple atheist—or any atheist or agnostic—can, and should, make a burden of proof argument here. Given the religious situation—the state of play for anyone touched by modernity in living religious or secular lives and thinking about belief and unbelief—the onus is now on the Jew, the Christian or the Moslem to give us reasons supporting the claim that we should be, or should continue to be, Jews, Christians, or Moslems. (Presumably, if we should be Jews or Christians at all, we should, in the exclusive sense of "or," either be Jews or Christians, for either a man became God or He did not. For a Jew no man could be God, and for a Christian Jesus—a man—must be God. But that is a fraternal religious dispute. The atheist is interested in more fundamental issues.) On the surface, it appears irrational for a philosophically and scientifically educated person, who is part of the culture of modernity in the twentieth century, to believe in God, at least where God is construed in anything like an orthodox way. The God of Braithwaite and Hare can, of course, be accepted by anyone and does not threaten secular sensibilities or beliefs, though their conceptions might amuse the atheist a bit. If nothing more is involved in the belief in God than what Braithwaite and Hare allow (to believe in God is to have a certain agapeistic attitude that we associate with certain stories, the truth of which we may or may not believe), then, as my colleague C. B. Martin said years ago, all unbelievers can be led gently into belief. But where the concept of God is a serious one, the burden of proof is on the religious believer to show that appearances are deceiving by, on the one hand, showing that it is perfectly rational, or at least not irrational, to believe in God or, on the other hand, d la Kierkegaard and Hamann, to show that, though it is irrational, or cognitively speaking irrational, to believe in God, that that notwithstanding we should, or perhaps even must, believe in God to avoid sickness unto death.

II

Elsewhere I have looked at the Kierkegaardian option from a host of sides and I will concentrate on the prima facie, but only prima facie, more plausible non-Kierkegaardian response. Some Christian philosophers might accept the burden of proof and argue that Christian belief is no less a rational option than atheism. A central argument in this tradition is that the world of our experience is systematically ambiguous sustaining both theistic and atheistic interpretations of our experience but lending decisive support to neither. Believing one way or another, for both atheist and theist, involves something like an act of faith. Moreover, religious beliefs, the claim goes, are in no worse shape than many of our fundamental everyday beliefs held by believers and atheists alike. We may not be able to prove that there is a God but, it has been argued, we cannot prove that there are other minds, that the sun will come up tomorrow, that time is real, that there are real causal powers, or that there is an external world. We are just as stuck with these evident realities as we are with God. People arguing out of this tradition often invoke a kind of parity argument. The secularist, it is claimed, has to take a lot of things on faith, too. If it is demonstration you are after, it has been said, you can no more demonstrate the existence of other minds, the presence of causes, the existence of the external world, or the reliability of your senses, than you can the existence of God. If it is irrational to believe in God because we cannot demonstrate His existence, then it is equally irrational to believe in other minds, induction, the external world, the reality of time, causal powers, and the like. If you say that it is irrational to doubt those things, even though you cannot prove (i.e., demonstrate) their existence, then why you do not also say that it is irrational to doubt the existence of God, or, at the very least, why do you not say that it is not irrational to believe in God, even though you cannot prove that God exists? If, on the other hand, you are a kind of romantic rationalist and you say that it is irrational to believe that there are these seemingly evident things (e.g., causal powers, time, the external world), then (if that is so) the atheist (simple or convoluted) is plainly in no better position than the theist. Science, the claim might go, rests just as much or just as little on faith as does religion. Either we have very good reasons to be skeptical about both or we have good reasons not to be skeptical about either. If demonstration is our ideal—that is, if we are rationalists—we should be skeptical about both. Neither will yield demonstrations. In any event, the religious person need not think that religious beliefs are any more epistemologically threatened than other key beliefs dear to the hearts of common-sense realists, "scientific realists," and fallibilistic empiricists alike. (G. E. Moore, David Armstrong, and J. L. Mackie, atheists all, are exemplifications in order of presentation of those positions.) Though these arguments, in one form or another, are remarkably popular, they seem to me to have very little merit. Their defenders have (to first put the matter historically) never taken to heart lessons we have learned, or should have learned, from such diverse philosophers as Locke, Moore, Wittgenstein, and Austin. People who defend theism in the above way take bad rationalistic metaphysics far too seriously and have an utterly unrealistic conception of proof or, if you insist on taking proof in that "strict" way, an utterly unrealistic conception of its role in reasonable human deliberation. They are unawareof what Frederich Waismann once called the "irrational heart of rationalism." Take the contrast between belief in God and belief in other minds. (I take other minds but I could have taken any of the other traditional metaphysical conundrums.) After listening with comprehension (or, for that matter, even without much comprehension) to a careful demonstration that we cannot know that other people have minds, the simple atheist, or indeed the simple believer,

is surely justified in believing, no matter how good the metaphysical argument, that it is, after all, just an arcane academic conundrum devised by philosophers for their delectation. (Someone said, who was very much caught up in these little games, that a philosopher is someone who is fascinated by puzzles. But let us not confuse this with genuine inquiry. After all, we know with perfect certainty that Achilles can outrun the Tortoise.) The problem of whether God exists or whether we have a soul (which is quite different than whether we have a mind) is of a very different sort from the problem of other minds or the problem of the external world. Whether God exists or whether we have a soul are real perplexities of ours about what there is or perhaps can be and not just perplexities about the limits of demonstration or about what we mean when we say certain things or how we can most perspicuously display what we know. For other minds, the problem is simply how we know, not that we know, that others have minds. A successful analysis will have to show us how we can know that there are other minds. If it fails to do that, it is not a successful analysis. The correct outcome of the puzzle is not in the slightest in dispute or in doubt After all, the chap in philosophical perplexity about other minds (the skeptical phi- losopher chap) is addressing his argument to others whom he assumes have—or at least some of them have—the brains to understand it and assess it and who will come, if his argument is sound, to believe that we do not know how there can be other minds. But there is something Erzatz about his skepticism, for that he, like all of us, believes, without the slightest doubt, that there are other minds is evident from the very fact that he directs his argument to others for their comprehension and assessment. His doubt is not a first-order doubt about what we know but a second-order doubt about how we can know what we most certainly do know. Our doubts about whether God exists or whether we have souls are not at all like that, they are first-order doubts about what exists or can exist. They pose conceptual puzzles as well, but the outcome of the puzzle about what there is or can be is genuinely in doubt. We have, as Peirce stressed, real doubts here, not mere Cartesian doubts parading as genuine doubts. (This is not anti-intellectualism but seriousness about inquiry.) Even if someone, caught up in an absurd kind of romantic rationalism, did not accept the above line of reasoning, there is a modification of a familiar argument of G. E. Moore's that we can deploy. If some philosopher gives us a cleverly-constructed, seemingly airtight argument that we cannot know that there are other minds or an external world, it is always more reasonable to believe that somewhere there has been a flaw in the argument, either in the lines of inference or in the premisses accepted or in the reading given to the premisses, than to believe that we do not really know that there are other minds or that there is an external world. The greater miracle must be in accepting the skeptical arguments. (Remember that it is sound arguments we want here and not just valid arguments.) The force of this Moorean argument is enhanced if we take to heart the truism that proofs require premisses and that in any proof there must be a utilization, at some level, of premisses that themselves are not proved in that argument. Moreover, all justification is not by way of deductive arguments or, for that matter, by way of induction and we must not take proof and demonstration to be identical with justification. Finally, even if all of that were rejected by someone, the parity argument would still be a bad one for it would only show, for someone who could bring himself to such levels of fancy, that religious belief is not uniquely irrational or the only set of beliefs that are irrational, not that it may not be or is not itself irrational. Perhaps—so fancy heats the imagination—the atheist, who believes that there are other minds or that the sun will come up tomorrow or that he has a pair of hands, has beliefs that are as irrational as those of

the theist, who believes there is a God, because the atheist, without proof (i.e., demonstration), believes these things as does the theist as well who also believes, and again all around without proof, that there is a God. However, even if we accept all this fanciful stuff for the sake of the argument, this does not at all show that the theist is not being irrational both in believing in God and in believing that there is a God. Moreover, even here, after making all these implausible assumptions, we still would have to say that the theist was even more irrational than the atheist, for he not only has all the atheist's irrational beliefs, he has some additional ones as well of a very strange sort—beliefs that Ockham's razor would justify us in shaving away. The other "irrational beliefs" he shares with the atheist are not so shaveable, for they, humanly speaking, as both theist and atheist acknowledge, are not beliefs they can do without. But his theistic beliefs are not so indispensable. By sticking to them, he exhibits an even greater irrationality than does the atheist. We should resist playing this game in the first place. However, if for the sake of continuing the argument we do play, the atheist still comes out better than the theist. HI I have appropriated for my own purposes what I take to be certain Moorean or Wittgensteinian insights. A certain kind of Wittgenstein- ian (Norman Malcolm is a paradigm case) might turn this way of viewing things back on me. Wittgenstein said: "The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing. At the foundation of well- founded belief lies belief that is not well founded." Religious belief is like that, the Wittgensteinian claim goes, but so is scientific belief, moral belief, and the whole battery of common-sense beliefs about how to navigate in our world and how in both practical and not so practical ways to conceptualize it. The idea that rational persons hold their beliefs or even could come to hold their beliefs solely on the basis of evidence is an empiricist myth of a pre-fallibilist empiricist vintage. (It is not the fallibilistic empiricism of John Dewey or John Mackie.) "Religion," as one of Wittgenstein's disciples puts it, "is a form of life; it is language embedded in action—what Wittgenstein calls a 'language game.' Science is another. Neither stands in need of justification, the one no more than the other." It is, it has been argued, one of the primary pathologies of philosophy to believe that we must justify our language games or forms of life. There is nothing to be grounded here—nothing that is either well-grounded or ill-grounded. We should not be concerned with trying to prove the existence of God or with giving evidence or other epistemological considerations for believing that He exists. It is just these traditional philosphical taskscentral endeavors of the philosophy of religion—that are so mistaken. To so proceed just assumes, quite uncritically, as Norman Malcolm puts it, "that in order for religious belief to be intellectually respectable it ought to have an intellectual justification." Working with that assumption, philosophers have then went out to look for that rational justification—that rational foundation—and, where they have been clear-sighted, they have come back empty-handed. Indeed, they have come back empty-handed in any event. But that has not been apparent to all such God-seekers. Malcolm—following Wittgenstein—says that the mistake is in en- gaging in that endeavor and to make that assumption in the first place. Thinking that our fundamental religious beliefs require justification is, Malcolm tells us, like having the "idea that we are not justified in relying on memory until memory has been proved reliable." Philosophers have an irrational fear of groundless beliefs. Only when we have come to see, and to take to heart, how pervasive they are in all domains of life, how necessary and both how ineradicable and how benign most of them are, will we free ourselves from this pointless fear, from this rationalist prejudice that we must have a reason for everything, that everything we reasonably believe we must believe

for a reason. (When it is put so bluntly most of us would back away from it. But where we do not put it to ourselves so crudely, most of us, if we are philosophers, seem unself-consciously to assume something like that. It is the rationalistic prejudice of philosophers, whether they be rationalist or nonrationalist.) Many of these groundless beliefs are quite diverse over cultural space and historical time; and they, not infrequently—or so the claim goes—form into belief-systems that are incommensurable. These different belief-systems, these different forms of life, have different framework beliefs, fundamental propositions appealed to in justifying beliefs within the belief-system but, though they are so centrally placed in the belief-system, they are still beliefs concerning which no coherent ques- tion of their justification can arise. Our (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) fundamental religious beliefs—including our very belief in God—fall into this category. They are beliefs that contrast with a purely secular way of looking at things as well as with a Buddhist, Confucian, or Hindu way of looking at things. I have only sketched such a Wittgensteinian account. I have not been able to convey its subtlety and its power.351 have tried in various places to do that and to show both how it should be queried and challenged. But I have tried as well to show how it should not be so easily dismissed as many rationalistic philosophers (philosophers with unrealistic expectations from philosophy) are wont to do, though I should also remark that in my last series of essays about this Wittgensteinianism I have, in trying to convey its power, made too many concessions to it and I did not sufficiently see how a Peirceian-Deweyan pragma- tism (a fallibilistic empiricism or naturalism) while sharing some of its important insights, overcomes central difficulties of that view of the world. What I want to do here, very briefly, is to show that, even if we do succeed in establishing that such a Wittgensteinian view of things is the right one, we also, in that very stroke, utterly undermine Christianity in anything even approximating the Christian form or forms of life we have known historically. Christian beliefs become the beliefs of a form of life, not capable of being justified, but also not coherently claimable as being superior to other sometimes quite different and sometimes at least apparently conflicting forms of life, religious and nonreligious. But then the proud and assured claims to Revealed Truth and to the belief that Christ is The Truth and The Way undergo an undermining sea-change. Christianity could not be what it purports to be, for anyone who is even close to Christian orthodoxy, if such a Wittgensteinian conception of things is on the mark. But this is not a problem for the atheist who happens also to be a Wittgensteinian. It is, however, a problem for the religious believer, for, on that Wittgensteinian conception, Christianity becomes but one form of life among many—a form of life that cannot be shown to have any superior rationality, authenticity, or justifiability to other incommensurable forms of life. But that is precisely what anyone who regards himself as a Christian, in any tolerably orthodox sense, cannot accept. I do not regard such a Wittgensteinian view of things as correct, but if it is, the intentions of some Wittgensteinians to the contrary notwithstanding, it yields an utterly devastating view for Christianity. (In that way philosophy doesn't leave everything as it is. Or does it only not do so because it is bad philosophy?) That kind of bailout from the difficulties I raised in the earlier sections is no bailout at all. With such Wittgensteinian friends, the Christian philosopher might remark, who needs enemies.

IV

I want to end on a different note, the concision of which may give it an unintended dogmatic sound. Why—deliberately to commit the fal- lacy of the complex question—is the philosophy of religion so boring? I think the reason—or at least a principal reason—is that the case for atheism is so strong that it is difficult to work up much enthusiasm for the topic. (This strength of atheism or at least nonbelief is something that philosophers and other intellectuals in our era have their educated hunches about before they get into the intricacies of the philosophy of religion. These hunches are not just arbitrary cultural artifacts but have behind them the thrust of the development of our intellectual culture since the Enlightenment.) There is really not much of a contest anymore in the dispute between belief and unbelief. Since the Enlightenment religion has been on the run and on the abstract side; two major figures of the Enlightenment, Hume and Kant, have dealt a death blow to arguments for the existence of God. There are some philosophers who make new little twists and turns here that require a little fixing up, but basically the work here was done. Contemporary atheistic arguments here, such as J. L. Mackie's splendid The Miracle of Theism, are mopping up operations after the Enlightenment. (The puzzles in the philosophy of logic generated along the way by the contemporary argument are best examined independently of philosophical theology. It is significant that Saul Kripke, Michael Dummett, and Bas van Fraassen, major philosophers of logic and sophisticated philosophers, who are also very orthodox religious believers, have not come to the defense of the Faith. The reason is clearly not indifference or general diffidence.) It is very difficult, after all this history, to suppress a yawn when someone comes up, yet again, with a new version of the ontological argument, some new cosmological argument, another argument for design or one supporting knowledge of God from religious experience or from moral values. It would be consoling but utterly naive for the atheist to believe that after Mackie's book such philosophcial activity would subside. Mackie's book may for the time being be the best of that sort going but in the history of the debate there have been plenty of similar books. Much perceptive religious thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw that the game was up with natural theology and tried some variant of fideism, but such accounts (and they were varied) turned out on the sociological and psychological side to be vulnerable to the criticisms (again varied) of Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Weber, Durkheim, and Fromm as well as to the study of comparative religion and particularly to an anthropological study of religion. It is very difficult for a reasonable person informed by modernity to accept the Christian Bible (or indeed any other sacred text) as the revealed word of God, as a rock-bottom philosophically unsupplemented appeal, when he knows (1) that putative revelations are many and often con- flicting— anthropologically speaking there are thousands of religions (faiths)—and (2) when he also well understands that we are debarred, with such a rock-bottom appeal to the Bible, from appealing to any philosophical or scientific argument or set of considerations or to any other non-question-begging argument or set of considerations for de- termining which, if any, of these putative revelations is genuine (if Christianity can allow such a thing). (Talk of "higher" and "lower" religions, if all we have to go on is revelation, is going to be question- begging. There is no less and no more reason for following the belief- system of the Akuna of New Guinea than the Anglicans of Ontario.) When we add to these empirical criticisms of such broadly speaking fideist turns, the varied but often penetrating philosophical critiques of Brand Blanshard, Walter Kaufmann, C. B. Martin, Paul Edwards, Sidney Hook, Ronald Hepburn, Antony Flew, Michael Durrant, Axel Hagerstrom, and Ingemar Hedenius among others, the situation for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam looks very bleak indeed. There is

reason, pace Malcolm, to worry about the intellectual respectability, and thus the respectability, of those religions. And it also looks as if there were more interesting and/or more humanly pressing things for philosophers to do than to keep warming up this old stew. It is true that there are fascinating and vital things about religion that remain after its claims to legitimacy have been criticized to death, but they have nothing to do with claims to true religious beliefs or with claims that in some other way religious beliefs are justifiable or even sufficiently coherent so that they may be reasonably believed. And they have nothing to do with arguments for accepting religious authority. What remains is what Bernard Williams alludes to at the end of a sensitive and sympathetic review of Mackie's The Miracle of Theism.* Williams remarks "as soon as one sees religion, as Mackie rightly does, as a purely human phenomenon, it becomes a matter of great importance what human phenomenon it is and which of these explanations [explanations like those of Feuerbach, Marx and Freud], if any, are true." It is particularly crucial to ascertain, if we can, whether the content of religion (particularly "its more unnerving and antihumanist content") is best understood "as something alien to humanity and its needs" or whether it is best understood "as expressing needs that will have to be expressed in some form when belief in God has disappeared."However, this, as Williams recognizes, doesn't leave any room for the philosophy of religion. The concern of philosophy of religion is with the truth, justifiability, and coherence of religious beliefs. If philosophy establishes the coherence of theism, it then can go on to try to establish its truth, probable truth, or (otherwise construed) its rationality and authority. These are the distinctive tasks of a Jewish, Christian, or Islamic philosopher. A philosopher who, in Axel Hagerstrom's phrase, is a neutral observer of the actual (if such there be), is simply concerned to sort out those arguments along with the arguments of the atheistic and agnostic opposition. (John Wisdom and D. Z. Phillips believe that in their philosophical activities they are such neutral chaps. But reading a reasonable chunk of their work will reveal this to be pure self-deception.) The atheist philosopher, by contrast, is concerned to show either the incoherence of theistic belief, its falsity or probable falsity, or otherwise its lack of rational warrant or moral requiredness. These tasks complete the tasks of the philosophy of religion and they are all prior to and distinct from Williams's very pressing question. As Williams remarks, Mackie might have put it himself, "after the issues of truth and argument have been laid aside, there is no philosophy of religion, but only anthropology or another social science to help us, or perhaps the imaginative powers of literature."Williams opines that "still philosophy in the guise of moral philosophy and philosophy in its reflections about society and about the mind" may be of help here in our gaining a reasonable undersanding of and our coming to have the best attitude toward (if there is a "best attitude" here) the needs that religion has served and their new role in the Godless world of increasingly secularized societies. (Here we should keep in mind Max Weber on the de-mystification of the world.) I am rather more skeptical than is Williams about whether moral philosophy, social philosophy, and most strikingly the philosophy of mind, particularly as those things are practiced in our dominant Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian tradition, is likely to be of much help. It is also not terribly evident that much help will come from elsewhere: the Continent or the East. (Perhaps Gilbert Ryle was not just being ethnocentric when he was reported to have said that the only light that comes from the East is the sun.) Perhaps philosophy radically reconstructed in some Marxian, Deweyan, or Habermasian way, or combination thereof, might be of help. But the proof of this pudding is in the eating. But, be that as it may, Williams's question about the needs religion answers

to is the crucial question to ask if it is the case, as it surely appears to be, that there is no longer any point in talking about religious claims being true. But whether or not, there is room here for some kind of philosophical work (itself a comparatively trivial question), there surely is a new agenda here for a reflective examination of religion, given the demise of natural theology, revealed theology, and the philosophy of religion.

Here be Dragons. Exploring the Hinterland of Science by Maarten Boudry, 2011 (Conclusion)

Where pseudoscience goes wrong

After a long journey through the hinterland of science, we can retrace our steps to draw a number of general conclusions. In the first part of this thesis, we challenged the common philosophical wisdom on the supernatural and the problem of demarcation. Intelligent Design Creationism (IDC) fails to live up to its scientific pretension not because it is involved with a supernatural designer per se, but because it exhibits general telltale signs of pseudoscientific discourse: IDC theorists refuse to flesh out their design hypothesis and prefer to make use of convenient immunizations that make the theory impervious to criticism; the concepts devised by IDC advocates are ill-defined and suffer from equivocations in a way that transforms their central argument into a moving target; the theory is too vague to allow for specific predictions and to achieve any form of genuine explanatory unification; the bulk of IDC literature consists of purely negative arguments, launched with the sole purpose of distorting evolutionary theory and sowing doubt among the public at large; etc. Because IDC invokes supernatural entities, and because it is guilty of all those pseudoscientific sins, critics of the theory have conflated both issues and have rushed to the conclusion that one is intrinsically connected to the other. But this seems to be an example of what psychologists call the representativeness bias, i.e. a tendency to assume that the data which happen to be available are representative of the category to which those data belong. Because we have become so accustomed to supernaturalists committing these pseudoscientific sins, and because we have grown weary of creationist hypotheses that, when push comes to shove, boil down to “God did it and His ways are mysterious”, we can hardly imagine that any other supernatural hypothesis would be viable. But this is mistaken. In the world we happen to live in, there is simply no way to make sense out of the living world in terms of supernatural design except by retreating to the claim that God did it and His ways are mysterious. If there was even the remotest possibility of fleshing out the supernatural design hypothesis in a way that did not run slap up against the facts, creationists (and theists in general) would surely be the first to

spread the gospel. Only by highlighting in what ways supernaturalists might have succeeded does it transpire how miserably they have failed.

Exploring the hinterland of science

A corollary of our view is that science is in principle open to extraordinary evidence for the supernatural, but that its current verdict on all supernatural hypotheses proposed thus far has been uniformly negative. In fact, our claim is more modest than what defenders of Intrinsic Methodological Naturalism (IMN) claim: as we see it, there is no compelling reason why

supernatural interactions with the natural world, in the sense we have defined those terms, would be closed off to scientific investigation. If anything, the burden of proof is on those who exclude the supernatural from the purview of science a priori. They need to come up with an airtight and nontrivial definition of natural and supernatural causes that explains why the latter can never be amenable to scientific investigation. A defender of Provisory or Pragmatic Methodological Naturalism (PMN) can stick to a working definition of the supernatural, and is making no stronger a claim than that at least some of the phenomena satisfying that definition are amenable to scientific investigation. The only viable philosophical route towards discarding supernatural causation from science a priori is either to set up an argument establishing that the very idea of entities beyond space and time is impossible because it rests upon a category mistake, or that the idea of causal interaction between the natural and supernatural realms cannot be made coherent (Fales 2010). Once we accept the metaphysical possibility and possible causal efficacy of the supernatural, however, as most defenders of IMN make an explicit point of emphasizing, the methodological strictures of IMN no longer make any sense. The principle of IMN is based on a confusion between accidental features of the supernatural hypotheses that are on offer and intrinsic problems with the supernatural, but as we have argued in Chapter 2, it is also for a large part prompted by the political motivation to install a truce between science and religion. If science is perceived as being in irresolvable conflict with religion, so the argument goes, and if a choice between both magisteria is forced upon the public at large, then an overwhelming majority will side with the forces of darkness. Although we appreciate the political rationale behind this strategy, we have argued that ruling the supernatural out of science by philosophical fiat is counterproductive, philosophically incoherent and misleading. Most importantly, it plays right into the hands of IDC proponents. Always eager to cast evolutionists in the role of closed-minded and dogmatic materialists, IDC advocates have presented the strictures of IMN as a symptom of metaphysical prejudice against supernaturalism. Indeed, detractors of IMN view the principle as some kind of immunizing strategy of scientific naturalism, the use of which is the very antithesis of the scientific attitude, as we have seen in Chapter 5. Without a commitment to metaphysical naturalism, and in the absence of a sound methodological rationale, the a priori rejection of supernaturalism seems unfair indeed. In addition, the accommodationist strategy of dealing with religious dogmatism threatens to backfire on science, making some of the most solid arguments for evolution unintelligible, and fostering a misleading image of major scientific achievements. The position we have defended throughout the first part of this work (PMN) does not suffer from these philosophical and strategic complications:

(1) At least some supernatural hypotheses entail empirically detectable consequences, and are thus open to scientific investigation.

(2) As a matter of principle science is open to paranormal and supernatural claims, although the prospects of such hypotheses being borne out are extremely dim, and no sensible scientist wants to waste much time and resources investigating these claims.

(3) The absence of God (and other supernatural entities) from the corpus of scientific

knowledge is not a result of metaphysical prejudice or methodological exclusion, but of contingent scientific failure. The deck was not stacked against the Almighty to begin with, quite to the contrary.

(4) Darwin‖s empirical case against special creation by supernatural intervention is perfectly respectable and was a major factor in overturning the program of natural theology.

(5) Evolutionary theory does not inexorably lead to atheism, but there is no avoiding that it has undermined one of the most compelling – one is tempted to say the only respectable – argument for theism.

Chapter 7 is an illustration of the way we think the scientific pretensions of theories like IDC should be confronted: not by appealing to the naturalistic strictures of science and settling the matter by analytical definition, but by getting down into the trenches and confronting the conceptual and empirical shortcomings of IDC head-on. At the same time, Chapter 7 clears up the conceptual fog around irreducible complexity and shows why there have been several, apparently contradictory lines of criticism against the argument. In this case, luckily, this is not due to shaky philosophical doctrines on the part of some IDC critics, but it is entirely to blame on Michael Behe‖s own vacillations in his definition and use of irreducible complexity. Incidentally, such a direct line of attack has also been pursued by most defenders of IMN in tandem, including by Judge John E. Jones in his ruling on the Kitzmiller vs. Dover case. As we have argued in section 2.4.5, however, this makes their case against IDC open to the charge of incoherence, or at least of superfluousness. Why bother to put forward empirical arguments against IDC if its claims can be safely ruled out from the outset? For many scientists, philosophers and liberal theologians, IMN embodies the modern modus vivendi between science and religion much in the same way as the principle of Non-Overlapping Magisteria did for Stephen Jay Gould and his followers. By keeping scientific inquiry at bay and relegating the supernatural to a wholly separate domain, defenders of IMN have tried to safeguard a place for religion to which science cannot reach, but they have done so at the expense of philosophical integrity.

How to deal with pseudoscience

The first chapters of this doctoral thesis drive home the point that it is one thing to correctly recognize a pseudoscience for what it is, but quite another to find the appropriate philosophical and scientific weapons to confront it. We cannot afford a casual and complacent attitude towards pseudoscience, notably when it comes to the latest spate of creationist protestations against evolutionary theory. The luxury of being “obviously” on the right side of the fence may have the perverse effect that one does not even bother to support one‖s position with the best rational arguments. But even a theory that is wrong beyond any reasonable doubt deserves to be taken seriously and Interestingly, in his latest book our colleague Massimo Pigliucci (2010) offers an excellent rebuttal of Gould‖s NOMA solution (Gould 1999), but he fails to notice that the IMN position adopted in the ruling of Judge Jones is itself more politically convenient than philosophically accurate (Boudry 2010). confronted with careful arguments, particularly when its

defenders exploit every opportunity to cast themselves in a victimized role and complain that they are not being given a fair hearing. This is not to say that the strategy as we propose it does not face some difficulties of its own. To even engage with creationist opposition at all may leave uninformed bystanders with the impression that there is a legitimate scientific debate going on, or that evolutionary scientists are forced on the defense. It is even more difficult to explain why some hypotheses are no longer seriously investigated at all, except insofar as they still enjoy wide support from the public at large (the same perverse effect is apparent in the case of public scares about, for instance, the link between cell phone radiation and cancer, or between vaccination and autism). Evolutionary theory has been in the indisputable scientific pole position for so many decades now, and any respectable alternative has been discredited since so long ago, that the decisive historical reasons for its victory have faded into the background. The evidence in favor of evolution by natural selection per se, and the damaging empirical and conceptual problems facing the different versions of natural theology and vitalism that were entertained until the end of the 19th century, are simply no longer part of the cutting-edge scientific debates nowadays. Were it not for the continuing resistance from the creationist fronts, the need for the current spate of books expressly aimed at didactically laying out the evidence for evolution would be much less pressing (Coyne 2009b; Dawkins 2009; Pigliucci 2002; Scott 2009; Sarkar 2007). We cannot ignore the politically powerful and well-organized creationist movement, but neither can we afford to use philosophically dubious doctrines for countering their arguments. Creationists are proficient at poking holes in evolution even when such holes exist only in their imagination, so a fortiori we should not allow them an opportunity to discover a real hole. As Philip Kitcher put it: Creationist literature is especially creative in its misunderstandings, in pinning odd views on the opposition and then playing "Gotcha!" [...] creationists can manufacture spurious problems faster than evolutionists can unmask their sophistries. (Kitcher 2007, p. 71) Likewise, as we have argued in Chapter 3, we should not be using outdated and misleading metaphors that unwittingly fuel design intuitions and play right into the hands of creationists. It is of little use if we succeed in keeping creationism out of the classroom if we still allow the use of covertly creationist metaphors in biology textbooks for no sound scientific reason. Of course, this does not mean that we should do away with design talk in biology altogether, as the notion of design is vital to any discussion of biological adaptation and functionality (Dennett 1996). However, we should be cautious in using detailed mechanistic metaphors that stretch the design metaphor beyond its limits. A careless use of mechanistic and informational metaphors is ill-advised especially in the light of current research in cognitive and developmental psychology, which suggests that persistent misconceptions about evolution are grounded in the cognitive architecture of our mind. For example, experiments with young children reveal their proneness to what has been termed "promiscuous" teleology: children intuitively prefer explanations in terms of purpose and intentional design over simple causal explanations, even for natural phenomena where no design is involved. Deborah Keleman has even suggested that children are "intuitive theists" (Kelemen 2004; Kelemen and Di Yanni 2005), in the sense that they are intuitively disposed towards viewing the natural world in terms of artificiality and teleofunctional design. If indeed there are deeply-engrained cognitive limitations and biases that hinder the acceptance of evolutionary theory (Blancke, Boudry et al. in press), then a fortiori we have to be cautious in employing metaphors that bolster these intuitions about design and artificiality.

Method in madness

This last point about our cognitive susceptibility for design reasoning can be viewed as a prelude to the third part of this dissertation, in which we draw upon a wide array of cognitive research to explain why belief systems that display certain structural features are so pervasive and culturally successful. Before outlining this argument in an epidemiological framework, we have offered a purely theoretical analysis of pseudosciences in terms of immunizing strategies and epistemic defense mechanisms. In addition to the examples offered in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, which were drawn from a wide range of different domains, we have elaborated on a number of specific case studies in the subsequent chapters: the concept of irreducible complexity in IDC, the theory-internal explanations for obscurity and conceptual incoherence by Lacan and his apologists, and the methodological and conceptual complications in Freudian psychoanalysis. From a philosophical point of view, epistemic defense mechanisms are particularly interesting, because they lend the system of beliefs in question a kind of self-validating rationale. In Chapter 11, we have drawn upon research on cognitive dissonance, belief perseverance and rationalization to construct an epidemiological framework that explains the cultural success of these self-validating beliefs. By outlining the free- floating rationale underlying these belief structures, we have shown that there need not be much conscious deliberation involved in the construction of their protective shield, and that cultural selection forces plus mechanisms of psychological self-correction may spontaneously give rise to such constructions. Our analysis has shown that, contrary to the prevailing opinion about the fragility of weird belief systems, there is substantial method in madness. Not surprisingly, intelligent people are anything but invulnerable to irrational beliefs, because they above all are proficient at rationalization, ad hoc reasoning and belief perseverance in the face of difficulties. The third part of this thesis was explicitly framed in the epidemiological approach to culture developed by Dan Sperber, and the cognitive and selectionist turn in the scientific study of religious beliefs. The general question put forward by Sperber and researchers in CSR is why certain cultural representations are more successful than others. By figuring out the cognitive and epistemic constraints through which the dissemination of cultural representations is channeled, through small incremental effects, we are able to explain larger cultural trends. As Liénard and Boyer have put it: In cultural transmission [...] very small effects aggregated over many cycles of transmission are sufficient to create massive trends. (Lienard and Boyer 2006, p. 824) One possible objection against our approach is that we stack the deck against certain theories by calling them “weird” to begin with, as if their implausibility has already been established beyond reasonable doubt, and only the question of their pervasiveness remains to be answered. How indeed do we decide that a belief system is “weird”? Is that assessment not based on a subjective notion of weirdness? We do not think that much hinges on this terminology, as the epistemological analysis of these belief systems must stand on its own merits. If our analysis is correct, the beliefs and belief systems in question propagate not in virtue of their standing in certain relations to reality, but rather due to the way in which they are enmeshed with other beliefs and to the way our minds operate. The self-validating rationale exhibited by these beliefs ensures that they are not constrained by the way the world actually is, and this allows them to take on weird contents. The most parsimonious view about such belief structures is that they propagate for no other reasons that the ones just mentioned. In other words, establishing their resilience and self-validating nature does not equate with demonstrating that they are wrong, but it is good

circumstantial evidence for that thesis. Although it is by no means impossible for such beliefs to be true, their truth would be a matter of sheer luck or coincidence. In Chapter 10, we have belabored that point in the context of Freudian psychoanalysis, arguing that the epistemic structure of Freudian doctrine, together with its flexible methodology, ensures that there are no significant constraints on theory formation in psychoanalysis. Likewise, in Chapter 11, we have argued that conspiracy theories and certain paranormal belief systems, simply by virtue of their internal structure and their rich conceptual resources, may have a shallow ring of plausibility that is completely disconnected from their relation to any objective facts out there. An important theme that is developed throughout the second and third part of this work is that the study of pseudoscience and irrational belief systems sheds light on the nature of human rationality itself. Just as optical illusions and visual impairments are informative about the fabric of visual perception, the study of irrational belief systems allows us to gain better access to the intricacies of human cognition. Though he has not often been quoted approvingly in this work, Sigmund Freud has captured this principle with a beautiful metaphor: If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal´s structure (Freud 1964, p. 59). The idea that irrationality is the outcome of a special mode of thinking, disconnected from normal reasoning functions, is being progressively abandoned by cognitive scientists and psychologists. Rationality and irrationality are better conceived as opposite sides of the same coin (Talmont-Kaminski 2007, 2008). The present study on pseudoscience vindicates this more sophisticated view on rationality and its dark counterpart.

(1) On closer inspection, many forms of persistent irrationality are predictable side-effects of

reasoning heuristics that are quite efficient in the appropriate contexts for which they

evolved.

(2) Believers are not the simple-minded fanatics for which they are often mistaken, and intelligent people are anything but invulnerable to irrational belief systems. Quite to the contrary, there are some compelling reasons to think that intelligent people are more prone to irrational thinking than others.

(3) Popular pseudoscience and other weird belief systems are more complex and less fragile in the face of adverse evidence and criticism than is commonly assumed. The assumption that they manifest distinct modes of irrational reasoning, disconnected from and opposed to rational reasoning processes, has not been borne out.

In Chapter 12, we have applied the cultural selection framework developed in section 11.6 to belief formation about the modus operandi of supernatural beings and the efficacy of petitionary prayer. Assuming the causal closure thesis of nature, which we have argued for on a posteriori grounds in Chapter 1, we noted that it is highly unlikely that belief in the efficacy of prayer is pervasive because of the actual occurrence of supernatural intervention, psychosocial or otherwise. A number of psychological, cultural and cognitive explanations are available for tackling the problem of explaining the persistence of belief in "theo-mundane causation" (Fales 2010). We have developed an epidemiological framework that explains not only why such beliefs may nonetheless

be thriving, but also why they take on specific, culturally successful forms. On the basis of a number of cognitive considerations, and the nature of observational confirmation, we have argued that beliefs in modes of divine action that are subtle and indistinguishable from the natural course of events are most attractive, because they are more conducive to occasional confirmation and more resilient to persistent failure.

The demarcation problem

The debate about methodological naturalism, the demarcation problem and appropriate strategies for dealing with pseudoscience is reminiscent of a philosophical controversy in the 1980s between, among others, Michael Ruse, Larry Laudan, Philip Quinn and Barry Gross (reprinted in Ruse 1996a; Pennock and Ruse 2009). In 1981, Michael Ruse appeared on the witness stand of the McLean v. Arkansas trial on the teaching of "scientific creationism" in biology classrooms. In his expert testimony, Ruse offered a set of demarcation criteria for distinguishing real science from pseudoscience such as creationism, which were eventually taken up by judge William Overton in his ruling:

(1) It is guided by natural law.

(2) It has to be explanatory by reference to natural law.

(3) It is testable against the empirical world.

(4) Its conclusions are tentative, i.e. are not necessarily the final word.

(5) It is falsifiable.

In a short article following the trial, Laudan (1982; reprinted as Laudan 1996b) takes issue with Ruse‖s involvement in the trial and his proposed set of demarcation criteria, arguing that it is full of "woeful fallacies" (1996b, p. 354) and presents a "false stereotype of what science is and how it works" (p. 355). In a second and influential essay (Laudan 1983; reprinted as Laudan 1996a), Laudan takes his critique one step further, proclaiming that all past philosophical attempts to separate science from non-science have failed, and in the end declaring the death of the demarcation project (Laudan 1983; reprinted as Laudan 1996a). In the first part of this doctoral thesis, we have defended an approach for dealing with pseudoscience that is in some sense congenial to Laudan‖s proposal. As Laudan has dismissed the term pseudoscience as a "hollow phrase" which any honest philosopher should get rid of, whereas we have employed it extensively throughout this work, it is instructive to revisit the philosophical aftermath of the McLean v. Arkansas trial and Laudan‖s critique in particular. This allows us to clarify where exactly we follow Laudan‖s lead and where we part ways with him in, as it appears, perfectly diametrical directions. Laudan is right that Ruse‖s definition of science leaves a number of loopholes for creationists to exploit, and that it does not reflect a consensus among philosophers of science. In particular, we follow his argument that creationist claims are not intrinsically untestable (see 1.4.5), and that it is important to distinguish between establishing the existence of a phenomenon and explaining it in a lawlike way (see 1.4.2 and 1.4.3). Finally, we sympathize with Laudan‖s conclusion that, rather than trying to find a silver bullet that will put an end to creationist nonsense for once and for all, we should "confront their claims directly and in piecemeal fashion by asking what evidence and

arguments can be marshaled for and against them" (Laudan 1996b, p. 354). However, Laudan‖s conclusion on Ruse‖s involvement in the trial and especially his obituary of the demarcation project are premature. As for his indictment of Ruse‖s testimony, Laudan seems to ignore that Ruse was standing as a witness in a trial on biology curricula and the separation between church and state, not in a academic conference on philosophy of science. Ruse‖s list is a rough and ready demarcation that is intended to suit specific legal purposes, not an attempt to finally resolve the demarcation problem. Although it is perfectly respectable to quarrel with some of the proposed criteria, Laudan extends remarkably little charity to Ruse and seems largely insensitive to the legal and constitutional issues that were involved in the case (Gross 1983; Pennock 2009; Ruse 1996b). In the context of this work, however, Laudan‖s sweeping pronouncement on the demarcation problem is more interesting. First, we should note that a large part of Laudan‖s critique of demarcationism comes down to nitpicking and pointing out irrelevant complications that have no epistemic import. For example, Laudan lists several forms of knowledge which, although certainly deserving epistemic warrant, are sociologically not recognized as "science" (e.g. singular historical claims, football strategies, literary theory, etc.). Laudan seems to think that this is most damning to the conception of science versus pseudoscience, but we beg to differ. For a number of understandable reasons, disciplines such as history and literary theory are not commonly included under the umbrella of "science" properly speaking, although any reasonable person would acknowledge that there is reliable knowledge to be found in these domains. For example, there is a very interesting philosophical discussion going on about the distinctive nature of historical science, as opposed to experimental science (e.g. Cleland 2002), but this is not what keeps the philosopher of pseudoscience awake at night. The distinction that interests the demarcationist is not that between forms of reliable empirical knowledge that are sociologically and institutionally classified as science and those that are not, but between those forms of empirical knowledge that rightly deserve epistemic credit and those that fail to live up to their pretensions. If one acknowledges that historical inquiry can produce knowledge that is on a par with good science, the question is whether and how we can distinguish this from what David Aaronovitch has termed "voodoo history" (Aaronovitch 2010). To the extent that the received history of the second world war deserves to be called scientific, Holocaust denial certainly does not. Does anyone want to quarrel over whether Holocaust denial ought to be labeled as either voodoo history or pseudoscience, or maybe pseudo-history or failed history? A more fundamental problem facing Laudan‖s diatribe is that, even if it is futile to construct a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for defining science that will survive close philosophical scrutiny, that does not mean that the demarcation problem has ceased to exist. If anything, it is Laudan who clings to an old-fashioned demarcationism, because he is unable to envisage any other way in which the distinction between science and pseudoscience could be rendered intelligible. First, it may be more fruitful to view the categories of science and pseudoscience in terms of Wittgenstein‖s notion of family resemblance (Vermeir 2009): although there is no unique and essential feature shared by all pseudosciences, we can find a web of overlapping similarities that distinguish individual pseudosciences from bona fide science. The distinction between science and pseudoscience may be "vague" in a technical sense: while there are borderlands in between both domains, populated by specimens of theories that are interesting in their own right, we can readily point to paradigm cases of both bona fide science and pseudoscience. For example, in Chapter 5, we acknowledge that scientific theories are

tested in bundles, and every scientific research programme has a protective set of auxiliary hypotheses around its core hypotheses. Resilience to falsification is a matter of gradients, but that is not say that we cannot come up with straightforward examples: if a face-saving auxiliary purchases no theoretical progress (in the senses we have discussed) to balance the resulting loss in theoretical simplicity, the move may be rightly dismissed as ad hoc. Much philosophical attention has been devoted to interesting borderline cases of adhocness in the history of science, and sometimes this has fostered the opinion that there is no consistent and objective way to explicate the notion of adhocness. In Chapter 6, however, we have drawn upon examples of pseudosciences to illuminate our inchoate notion of adhocness. By revealing a systematic pattern of evasive reasoning in typical pseudoscience, while at the same time acknowledging forms of theoretical protection in genuine science, we have vindicated and at the same time qualified Popper‖s insistence on the importance of empirical boldness in theory formation. When viewed in that light, Laudan‖s take on the demarcation project is like for a biologist to dismiss the concept of "mammal" because of such interesting in-betweens as the platypus. Second, Laudan‖s argument that Ruse and Overton have "egregiously confuse[d] doctrines with the proponents of those doctrines" (Laudan 1996b, p. 353) shows that he is not acquainted with much pseudoscientific literature. Philip Quinn has echoed Laudan‖s complaint in his own comment on the Arkansas v. McLean case, and we have already encountered it in section 6.4.3: The requirement is that a theory be falsifiable by empirical evidence, not that its adherents admit that it has been falsified if and when it has been. (Quinn 1996, p. 381) However, our discussion in Chapter 5 has shown that it is not always fruitful, nor indeed consistently possible, to follow Laudan‖s and Quinn‖s lead and frame the issue of demarcation purely in terms of logical relations between a set of propositions (the doctrine) and empirical observations. No sooner had we introduced the distinction between immunizing strategies and epistemic defense mechanisms, than we had to problematize and partly retract it. Indeed, one of the main purposes for introducing this distinction was to show that, in the most interesting cases, it cannot be rigorously maintained. To the extent that these pseudoscientific moves are already implicit in or provoked by the system of beliefs itself, we have decided to talk about epistemic defense mechanisms. By contrast, if the belief system does have identifiable borders and distinctive content, and if the face-saving move in question falls outside these theoretical bounds, then we are dealing with an immunizing strategy. At the end of Chapter 5 and in section 6.4.3, we have stressed that there is no general and foolproof way to identify the theory-as-such and evaluate its scientific credentials. Inevitably, we had to move our focus to the attitude of pseudoscientists themselves, and we arrived at the conclusion that, at least to a certain extent, pseudoscience is simply what pseudoscientists do. Again, by insisting on a demarcation purely on the basis of doctrines and by dismissing any consideration for the attitude of pseudoscientists as "ad hominem" (see also Quinn 1996, p. 381), it is no wonder that Laudan is ready to announce the death of the demarcation project. The demarcation problem will not yield to an easy and clear-cut solution, as Laudan and others have pointed out, but that makes it all the more interesting and challenging from a philosophical point of view. We concur with Laudan that the problems of Intelligent Design Creationism or "scientific creationism" cannot be reduced to a violation of some basic rule of science that is written in stone, but this is a far cry from arguing that theories like creationism do not deserve to be labeled as pseudoscience. How would Laudan call an endeavor which miserably falls short of evidence for it while being abundant in evidence against it, whose

empirical and conceptual problems have been repeatedly exposed by its critics, and which, in spite of all this, continues to be touted as scientific or worthy of credence by its adherents, on the basis of spurious evidence and unsound arguments? Don‖t we want some term to distinguish this from bona fide scientific knowledge, or from respectable but discarded hypotheses in science? Has Laudan another word in store for us? It is telling that, in the course of his diatribe against the demarcation project, Laudan himself uses language that implicitly commits him to a quite definite and prescriptive view as to what is and is not science. For example, he talks about a "false stereotype of what science is and how it works" (1996b, p. 355) and elsewhere he states that "this requirement [about natural laws] is an While reading the different chapters on pseudoscience in this work, some readers may have felt that Laudan‖s critique looms large over this whole project. Nevertheless, we have decided to postpone an extensive discussion of Laudan‖s famous essay till the very end of this dissertation, because we think that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Now that we have covered quite some ground in the hinterland of science, we are in a better position to counter some of Laudan‖s objections. Hopefully, the present work has shown that the study of pseudosciences is worth pursuing and enriching for philosophers. Is it fair then to say about demarcationism, with Mark Twain, that the rumors of its death have been greatly exaggerated?

The God Beyond Belief: In Defence of William Rowe's Evidential Argument from Evil by Nick Trakakis, 2006 (Conclusion)

CONCLUSION: IS ROWE'S EVIDENTIAL ARGUMENT SUCCESSFUL?

The primary aim of this study is to determine whether the evidential argument from evil developed by Rowe during his early and middle period can be considered a success. But to be able to assess the merits of atheological arguments like Rowe's it is necessary to develop some criteria against which the success of such arguments can be measured. In Chapter 1, therefore, the following criteria were proposed as the minimum requirements that must be met before any argument A against the existence of God can be considered successful:

(1) The conclusion of A asserts (or obviously entails) that God does not exist;

(2) A is formally valid;

(3) A is informally valid;

(4) It is reasonable for S to believe that the premises of A are true, where S refers to the person offering the argument and, possibly, some members of that person's audience, and

(5) The background information k, from which the premises of A are drawn, is such that Pr (G/k) 0.5 and Pr (~G/k) 0.5, where 'G' corresponds to 'God exists'.

Our leading question can now be put a bit more precisely: Does Rowe's evidential argument meet conditions (1)–(5) above?

There is little doubt that Rowe's argument meets conditions (1), (2), (3), and (5). The critical question, then, is whether the premises that go to make up Rowe's argument are rationally

acceptable. Of course, the question as stated is incomplete, for it remains to be asked for whom and under what circumstances could the premises of Rowe's argument be rationally acceptable. This inevitably means that our answer to the question of whether it is rational for a person to accept the premises of Rowe's argument may vary depending on the particular person we have in mind and the circumstances that person finds herself in. But let's assume that the kind of person we are concerned with is an intellectually sophisticated adult (but not necessarily a professional philosopher) who is aware of, and understands, the kinds of issues raised in support of and against evidential arguments from evil. Can it be rational for such a person to accept the premises of Rowe's argument? To answer this question, we may defer to the results of my assessment of Rowe's argument as undertaken in Chapters 4–12. These results may be divided into three parts. First, the 'sceptical theist' objection to Rowe's inference from inscrutable evil to pointless evil was examined in Chapters 4–8 and was found to be inadequately supported. Second, various theodical options were canvassed in Chapters 10 and 11 as a possible way of refuting Rowe's factual premise, and it was found that a theodicy that appeals to the goods of free will, soul-making, and a heavenly afterlife goes much of the way (though not all the way) in accounting for horrendous moral evil. The most important finding from this investigation, however, was that natural evil – of any kind, amount, or distribution – remains beyond the pale of theodical explanation. Third, some challenges to Rowe's theological premise were considered in Chapter 12, but these were shown to be unsuccessful. On the basis of these results, it may be concluded that there are strong grounds for accepting the key premises underwriting Rowe's argument, viz., the factual and theological premises. For this reason, I would consider it rational (for an intellectually sophisticated adult apprised of the relevant information) to believe that the premises of Rowe's argument are true. And this, in turn, means that Rowe's evidential argument can be judged a success. Having reached this verdict on Rowe's argument, what follows? In particular, what follows for the theist who agrees with my assessment of Rowe's argument but is not entirely willing to give up on theism? There are at least two options available to such a theist, and in the remainder of this chapter I will consider the merits of each.

1 THE 'G.E. MOORE SHIFT'

One option, highlighted and endorsed by Rowe himself, involves a strategy used on various occasions by G.E. Moore against the arguments of sceptical philosophers like David Hume.2 Moore noted that sceptical arguments purporting to show that there are no material objects usually run something like this:

(6) Sceptical principles X and Y are correct.

(7) If sceptical principles X and Y are correct, I cannot know of the existence of this pencil.

(8) (Therefore) I cannot know of the existence of this pencil.

When attempting to refute such an argument, most philosophers would take direct aim at one or both of its premises.

But the premises employed by the sceptic are renowned for being either eminently plausible or very difficult to refute directly. Moore, therefore, opted for a more indirect strategy, which he represented as follows:

(9) I do know that this pencil exists.

(10) If sceptical principles X and Y are correct, I cannot know of the existence of this pencil.

(11) (Therefore) Sceptical principles X and Y (or at least one of them) must be incorrect.

Schematically, the sceptic's argument may be characterized as follows:

I. P

Q

R

Moore's argument, by contrast, displays the following form:

II. not-R

Q

---

not-P.

As Moore observed, arguments of type-I and arguments of type-II are equally valid, and both arguments share the same second premise. The choice between any two such arguments must therefore come down to a choice between their respective first premises. In the debate between Moore and the sceptic, for example, we must decide which of the following premises it is more rational to accept: 'I do know that this pencil exists' or 'Sceptical principles X and Y are correct'. And it is obvious, Moore claimed, that his own first premise is the more rational one to believe. Moore's strategy, then, consists in challenging arguments of type-I by turning such arguments on their head – that is to say, the conclusion of type-I arguments is rejected and then the denial of that conclusion is employed as the first premise in one's counter-argument. Rowe has dubbed this way of responding to an argument 'the G.E. Moore shift', and he has suggested that this strategy may be appropriated by the theist as a way of countering his own evidential argument. The theist, in other words, may argue as follows:

(12) There exists an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.

(13) An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any horrific evil it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.

(14) (Therefore) It is not the case that there exist instances of horrific evil which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.

Both Rowe's evidential argument and the above theistic argument employ premise (13) – that is, the theological premise. The above argument, however, begins with very the denial of the conclusion of Rowe's argument, and herein lies its application of the G.E. Moore shift. Although this strategy has been welcomed by many theists as an entirely valid way of responding to evidential arguments from evil4 – indeed, it is considered by Rowe to be "the theist's best response"5 – it is deeply problematic in a way that is often overlooked. The G.E. Moore shift is effective only if the grounds for accepting not-R in a type-II argument are more compelling than the grounds for accepting P in a type-I argument. Therefore, the theist who makes use of the G.E. Moore shift needs to have evidence in support of (12) (the existence of the theistic God) that is more compelling than the evidence in support of not-(14) (the existence of gratuitous evil). The problem here is that the kind of evidence that is typically appealed to by theists in order to substantiate the existence of God – for example, the three traditional theistic proofs – does not even aim to establish the existence of a perfectly good being, or else, if it does have such an aim, it faces formidable difficulties in fulfilling it. I have elaborated on this matter in Section 2 of Chapter 1, and so I will not say anything more about it here. But if this position is correct, then the theist may well be unable to offer any evidence at all in support of (12), or at least any evidence of a sufficiently strong or cogent nature in support of (12). The G.E. Moore shift, therefore, is not as straightforward a strategy as it initially seems.

2 RECONCEIVING GOD

If the theist cannot appeal to evidence in support of the existence of God in order to defeat Rowe's evidential argument, there remains only one further option short of abandoning theism altogether: viz., altering one's conception of God by modifying one or more of the central tenets of 'orthodox theism' (as this notion was explicated in Section 1 of Chapter 2). Although this is in some ways a quite radical response to the problem of evil, it seems to enjoy a wide degree of support. The turn towards a non-standard version of theism usually takes one of two forms.

2.1 Rejecting God's Perfect Goodness

On the face of it, rejecting the perfect goodness of God appears to be the least likely route a theist would take in response to the (logical or evidential) problem of evil. But many theists have taken just this route. Here is a small sample. David Blumenthal, a well-known Jewish theologian, affirms the reality of God's presence, power, and love but at the same time argues that, in the light of various Scriptural texts as well as evils such as the Holocaust and child sex abuse, we are compelled to add a further attribute to God – 'abusiveness': God, as portrayed in our holy sources and as experienced by humans throughout the ages, acts, from time to time, in a manner that is so unjust that it can only be characterized by the term "abusive". In this mode, God allows the innocent to suffer greatly. In this mode, God "caused" the holocaust, or allowed it to happen. John Roth, a liberal Protestant who has made a significant contribution to Holocaust studies, champions a 'theodicy of protest' which rejects all attempts to justify God's permission of evil and instead

emphasizes God's complicity in evil. In Roth's words: God possesses – but fails to use well enough – the power to intervene decisively at any moment to make history's course less wasteful. Thus, in spite and because of God's sovereignty, this God is everlastingly guilty, and the degrees run from gross negligence to murder.8 On this view, God's penchant for needless suffering impugns his total goodness, thus leading Roth to "affirm that God is good, but not perfectly good, and that both God and humanity could be better."

Brian Davies, a Catholic philosopher heavily indebted to the work of Thomas Aquinas, rejects the attribution of moral goodness to God. He contends that, even though God can be said to be good in some non-moral sense, it is "wholly inappropriate to think of God as something able to be either moral (well behaved) or immoral (badly behaved)." Davies provides a number of reasons for thinking that God cannot be a moral agent. He notes, for example, that God is traditionally thought to be the source of all beings. But to distinguish God from all beings, God cannot be thought of as a being existing alongside other beings. Moral agents are, of course, beings, some of whom are good and some of whom are bad. God, however, is not a being, and so God cannot properly be spoken of as a moral agent. Furthermore, a moral agent is someone who in some sense can succeed or fail – for example, she can succeed if she acts morally where others have failed to do so. But it makes no sense to talk of God as succeeding or failing. For reasons such as these, Davies is led to the following bleak

conclusion:

To be blunt, I suggest that many contemporary philosophers writing on the problem of evil (both theists and non-theists) have largely been wasting their time … They are like people attacking or defending tennis players because they fail to run a mile in under four minutes. Tennis players are not in the business of running four-minute miles. Similarly, God is not something with respect to which moral evaluation (whether positive or negative) is appropriate.

2.2 Rejecting Divine Omnipotence

Another, and far more popular, response to the problem of evil consists in rejecting divine omnipotence, or at least conceptualizing the property of omnipotence in a way that would be inconsistent with traditional forms of theism. Process theists are perhaps the best known exponents of this line of response. Following in the footsteps of Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne, David Ray Griffin maintains that "the creatures' twofold creative power of self-determination and efficient causation cannot be canceled, overridden, or completely controlled by God." And so, in contrast to orthodox theists, Griffin denies that God is omnipotent in the sense of having the power to unilaterally control all aspects of reality. He does not wish to deny, however, that God is all-powerful "not only in the sense of being the supreme power of the universe but also in the sense of being perfect in power, having all the power one being could possibly have."14 But he does concede that, on the process theist view, God cannot unilaterally determine any state of affairs or unilaterally prevent any evil from coming into being. In his view, God's power is the creative power to evoke or persuade; it is not the unilateral power to stop, to constrain, to destroy. The reason God does not intervene in nature or human affairs to prevent some of the worst evils is not that God is evil or indifferent, or that to do so would run counter to God's policy; it is simply

that God's power is of a different kind. Thus, by imposing limitations on divine power, process theists claim to greatly reduce the extent of God's responsibility for the evil in the world. In addition to process theists, various other theists have sought to place restrictions on divine power in the light of the problem of evil. For example, the so-called 'Boston personalists', Edgar Brightman and Peter Bertocci, were well-known for attempting to resolve the problem of evil by breaking with orthodox belief in an omnipotent God. In Bertocci's words, Out of respect for what seem the facts of human experience, it seems necessary to modify our conceptions of God. If we deny God's goodness, we are in fact denying that the cosmic Mind is God, for goodness is supreme in qualifying a being as God. If we limit God's reason and knowledge, we cannot account for the order of nature and man as we know it. The most reasonable suggestion is to limit God's power. More recently, rabbi Harold Kushner, in his best-selling book When Bad Things Happen to Good People, has stated that he could come to terms with a God who has permitted the death of his son from a rare premature ageing disease only by recognizing certain limitations in God's power (specifically, Kushner holds that God is "limited in what He can do by laws of nature and by the evolution of human nature and human moral freedom"18). In a similar vein, John Bishop has suggested that theists can make progress on the problem of evil only by giving up divine omnipotence. More precisely, it is God – according to Bishop – who ought to be viewed as giving up his omnipotence (so as to preserve his perfect goodness) after having created the world. Bishop therefore states that "theists should reject the concept of God as an agent outside the natural order who has an absolutely unlimited power of intervention within nature." Similar proposals abound in the literature on the problem of evil.

2.3 The Worship–Worthiness of God

The foregoing modifications in the orthodox conception of God may succeed in resolving the problem of evil insofar as the existence of evil (or certain amounts or types of evil) is no longer mysterious given the relevant limitations in the divine nature. One may object, however, that the proposed 'cure' is worse than the 'disease'. For in limiting God in any of the above ways in order to meet the problem posed by evil, it seems that we end up with a God who is no longer fit to be the object of our worship, total devotion, unconditional commitment, or love and trust. We are presented, in other words, with a God who is not able to evoke the kinds of attitudes and practices that have played a central role in theistic religions. Is there any substance to this criticism? Let's begin with proposals involving the rejection of God's perfect goodness. It is abundantly clear, I think, that the line of thought developed by writers such as Blumenthal and Roth, according to which God is omnipotent but limited in goodness, renders God unworthy of worship. For if it is within God's power to prevent or eliminate any evil in the world, and yet God permits (or even inflicts) evil simply due to a lack of concern for the welfare of his creatures, then we would be entirely justified in taking such a deity to be a moral monster. It is therefore difficult to understand how Blumenthal and Roth can retain any measure of devotion and commitment towards their God. The approach taken by Brian Davies is a little more nuanced, as he does not think of God's moral goodness as limited but rather refuses to ascribe any moral properties at all to God. On this view, the statement 'God is good' should not be interpreted to mean that God is a moral agent or that God is morally well-behaved. Rather, to say that God is good is just to say that God is a (or the) fully realized instance of his kind (viz., divinity) – much as we speak of a 'good house' or a 'good

holiday' without suggesting that we are talking in moral terms. But, once again, the worship-worthiness of such a God is questionable. For if God is non-moral by nature, he cannot exhibit affective attitudes such as love and concern towards his creatures. It would therefore be impossible to enter into a reciprocal relationship with God, and it would be difficult, if not inappropriate, to express common theistic attitudes (of love, adoration, praise, and gratitude) towards God, at least in the degree to which we are enjoined to express such attitudes. In short, Davies' God appears morally indifferent or impersonal and hence unfit for worship.23 Do proposals to limit God's power fare any better? The answer largely depends on the extent of the limitations imposed on God's power. It is widely thought, for example, that God's inability to perform logically impossible feats (such as creating a square circle or altering the past) are no stain on God's perfection and worship-worthiness. But the limitations that would need to be made to divine power in order to resolve the problem of evil are far more significant. Indeed, God's power would have to be reduced to such an extent that he could not do anything that is empirically impossible. For if God permits the emergence and spread of something like AIDS, not because he wishes to attain some higher good, but simply because he lacks the power to rid the world of AIDS, then his power would be bound by the laws of nature (not just the laws of logic). But then God can do nothing above and beyond what a mere human being can do. We cannot eliminate the AIDS virus simply by means of a decree or an act of will, and neither can God. But a God whose power is no greater than a human's is an unlikely object of worship.

3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

It seems, then, that the price to be paid for modifying the orthodox conception of God in the foregoing respects is too high, for even if such modifications dissolve the problem of evil, they also have a corrosive effect on religiously significant attitudes and practices such as the love and worship of God. The strategy of resorting to the 'G.E. Moore shift' as a way out of the problem of evil also faces significant difficulties. Much depends here on what other evidence one claims to have in support of the existence of a perfect being. But as pointed out in Section 2 of Chapter 1, the task of furnishing such evidence is daunting, to say the least. The significance of these results for theism may be put as follows. If, as I have argued in Chapters 4–12, Rowe's evidential argument successfully withstands the most powerful objections raised against it, and if the more indirect ways of responding to Rowe's argument discussed in the present chapter (i.e., the G.E. Moore shift and revisions to the concept of God) prove to be unsatisfactory, then the only rational course of action left for the theist to take is to abandon theism and convert to atheism. This is by no means a novel conclusion, but it has been reached largely by way of a much neglected route, viz., by highlighting theism's inability to account for any natural evil at all. My conclusion, then, stands in stark contrast to the common irenic view that, once all sides to the debate over the evidential problem of evil have been given a proper hearing, we arrive at a kind of stalemate or détente, with neither side in a position to claim victory.25 Against this view, I have argued that Rowe's arguments succeed in settling the matter in favour of atheism. This conclusion, however, is necessarily provisional and tentative. For one thing, it remains to be seen whether the theist can, against seemingly high odds, meet the challenge of finding evidence in support of theism that outweighs the evidence of evil. And in spite of the ever-increasing literature on the problem of evil, there always remains room for further investigation as old lines of inquiry fall into disrepute

and new streams of thought rise to prominence. The current debate over open theism, for example, raises the question as to which model of divine providence – the openness of God model, the Molinist model, or the Calvinist model – has the better resources for dealing with the problem of evil. I have briefly touched on this topic in the present study, but it clearly merits closer examination. No-one can claim, therefore, to have said the last word on God and evil. For some this is merely cause for frustration or resignation; but for the rest of us it reveals the fascination and beauty of all philosophical problems.

Scientific Realism is the only way by Michael Devitt (The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Science Second Revised and Expanded Edition, 2013)

Arguments for scientific realism

The most famous argument for scientific realism is the argument from the success of science (Putnam 1978: 18–19). Scientific theories tend to be successful in that their observational predictions tend to come out true: if a theory says that S, then the world tends to be observationally as if S. Why are theories thus successful? The best explanation, the realist claims, is that the theories' theoretical terms typically refer

– scientific realism – and the theories are approximately true: the world is observationally as if S because, approximately, S. For example, why are all the observations we make just the sort we would make if there were atoms? Answer: because there are atoms. Sometimes the realist goes further: it would be "a miracle" that theories were so successful if they were not approximately true. Realism does not just have the best explanation of success, it has the only good explanation. Larry Laudan (1981) mounted a sustained attack on this argument. In the first prong of this attack, Laudan offers a list of past theories – phlogiston theory is a favorite example – that were successful but are now known not to be approximately true. The realist has a number of responses. First, the success of a theory can be challenged: although it was thought to be successful, it was not really so. But unless the criterion of success is put so high that not even contemporary theories will qualify, some theories on Laudan's list will surely survive. Second, it can be argued that a theory was not, in the appropriate sense, well-established and hence not the sort that the realist is committed to; or that entities it posited were not essential to its success. But surely some theories on the list will survive this test too. Third, the realist can insist that there are many other past theories, ones not on Laudan's list, for which the realist's explanation of success works fine. Still, the realist faces a problem with the theories that survive on Laudan's list. In my view (2005), the realist should modify the explanation for such a surviving theory, explaining its success by appealing to the unobservables of replacement theories.

But perhaps anti-realists can explain success? There have been attempts:

• Bas van Fraassen offered a Darwinian explanation: "any scientific theory is born into a life of fierce competition, a jungle red in tooth and claw. Only the successful theories survive" (1980: 39). But this explanation is not relevant because it is not explaining the same thing as the realist's

success argument. It is explaining why we humans hold successful theories. It is not explaining why those particular theories are successful.

• Arthur Fine (1986b) claimed that anti-realism can explain success as well as realism can by appealing to a theory's instrumental reliability (Fine is not committed to this anti-realist explanation). Jarrett Leplin develops this proposal and labels it "surrealism." The basic idea is that although the world has a deep structure this structure is not experientially accessible. "The explanation of the success of any theory ... is that the actual structure of the world operates at the experiential level as if the theory represented it correctly" (Leplin 1997: 26). Leplin goes on to argue that the surrealist explanation is not a successful alternative to the realist one. In the second prong of his attack on realism, Laudan has criticized the realist's success argument for its dependence on inference to the best explanation, or abduction. Fine (1986a: 113–22) has made a similar criticism. Abduction is a method of inference that an anti-realist might reject. Van Fraassen (1980), for one, does reject it. Is the realist entitled to rely on abduction? Richard Boyd (1984: 65–75) has argued that the anti-realists are not in a position to deny entitlement because scientists regularly use abduction to draw conclusions about observables. Boyd's argument illustrates an important, and quite general, realist strategy to defend unobservables against discrimination, to defend "unobservable rights." The realist starts by reminding the anti-realist that the debate about scientific realism is not over extreme skepticism: the anti-realist claims to have knowledge of observables (see "Common-sense realism"). The realist then examines the anti-realist's justification for this knowledge. Using this justification she attempts to show, positively, that the epistemology it involves also justifies knowledge of unobservables. And, she attempts to show, negatively, that the case for skepticism about unobservables produced by the anti-realist is no better than the case for skepticism about observables, a skepticism that all parties to the scientific realism dispute have rejected. So the anti-realist's criticism of the success argument leaves him with the task ofshowing that he can save his beliefs about observables without using abduction. If he cannot manage this, the criticism fails. If he can, then the realist seems to face the task of justifying abduction. How concerned should the realist be about this? Perhaps not much. After all, the anti-realist must rely on some methods of ampliative inference, even if not on abduction, to overcome extreme skepticism. How are those methods justified? The anti-realist may well have little to say about this, relying on the fact that these methods are widely and successfully used in science and ordinary life and on there being no apparent reason to abandon them. But, of course, that seems to be true of abduction as well. If further justification for a method is required, where could we find it? Any such justification would have to be either a priori or empirical. Either way, it is not obvious that the justification of abduction will be more problematic than the justification of the methods of inference relied on by the anti-realists.

The literature contains two other explanationist arguments for scientific realism:

1 Why is our scientific methodology instrumentally reliable in that it leads to successful theories, theories that make true observational predictions? Boyd (1984) offers the realist explanation that the methodology is based in a dialectical way on our theories and those theories are approximately true. He argues that anti-realists cannot explain this methodological success. 2 I have offered elsewhere (1997: 113–17) a very basic argument: by supposing that the unobservables of science

exist, we can give good explanations of the behavior and characteristics of observed entities, behavior and characteristics which would otherwise remain inexplicable. In sum, there are some good arguments for scientific realism provided the realist is allowed abduction. It is not obvious that anti-realists are in a position to disallow this.

Conclusions

The realism doctrines that concern philosophy of science are best seen as straightforwardly metaphysical. Extreme skepticism poses the background issue: it threatens realism about observables. Sustaining this common-sense realism requires adopting some ampliative method of inference. Only then does a realism about unobservables, scientific realism, arise as a distinct issue. Various explanationist arguments for scientific realism succeed provided that the realist is entitled to abduction. The underdetermination argument against realism fails because we have no good reason to believe an empirical equivalence thesis that would serve as its premise. The pessimistic metainduction, with its attention to past theoretical failures, does pose a problem for realism. But the problem may be manageable. For, the anti-realist must argue that the historical record shows not only that past failures are extensive but also that we have not improved our capacity to describe the unobservable world sufficiently to justify confidence that the accounts given by our current well-established theories are to a large extent right. That is difficult to argue.

Antony Flew – God and Philosophy, 2005 (Existence and Causality)

The Argument to Design has had, and continues to have, preeminent inent popular appeal. By constrast the Ontological Argument, which we shall now consider, might at first sight seem to come at the opposite site end of the scale. Also, whereas the former is part of the stock in trade of the most sophisticated as well as of the most popular apologetic, getic, the latter was explicitly repudiated by Aquinas in the first Article of the Question in the Summa Theologica in which he offers the Five Ways (I[ii] 1). The argument nevertheless deserves our close attention: tion: not only for the general reason that any consideration which has been either very widely or very respectably offered-or both-must demand attention when the conclusion seems so important; but also for reasons which apply particularly to this case. The Ontological Argument has played a big part in the history of ideas. For although it was first actually formulated by Saint Anselm in the eleventh century tury CE, a site was marked out for it in the fourth century BCE in connection not with God but with Plato's Form of the Good, the reality of which is apparently to be established by philosophical analysis alone (Republic, §§ especially 531-34); while in the modern period-despite the refutations of Aquinas, Hume, and Kant-Descartes, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Hegel all gave it work to do. Again, points which can be made in dissecting the Ontological Argument have much wider implications. Nor, again, is it at all clear that Aquinas and his followers have really succeeded in emancipating themselves completely from the errors which constitute its nerve. Finally a treatment of the Ontological Argument will serve well as an introduction to a consideration of various others, each of which might be thought capable of defeating the Stratonician presumption. These other arguments all attempt to show that the universe does not, and could not, exist, and possess whatever characteristics it may happen to possess, in its own right; and hence that its existence demands and points to some special sort of explanation somehow `outside' itself. 4.2 Let us consider the version of the Ontological Argument presented sented by

Descartes. This is rather easier to follow than that of Anselm. Also the setting of the argument against a mathematical background suggests a main source of its appeal to those, from Plato onward, who have nourished the hope that an ideal structure of knowledge might be constructed somehow on the model of a mathematical matical system. Descartes writes in part 4 of the Discourse: "I saw very well that if we suppose a triangle to be given, the three angles must certainly be equal to two right angles; but for all that I saw no reason to be assured that there was any such triangle in existence, while on the contrary, on reverting to the idea which I had of a Perfect Being, I found that in this case existence was implied in it in the same manner in which the equality of its three angles to two right angles is implied in the idea of a triangle.... Consequently, it is at least as certain that God, who is a Being so perfect, is, or exists, as any demonstration of geometry can possibly be." It may not be immediately obvious precisely what the premise of this argument is supposed to be. One which is definitely not involved is the psychological fact that all, or some, men possess this notion as a part of their mental equipment. Descartes in his third Meditation does actually offer a quite different argument, which undergraduates have been known to confuse with the Ontological, and which does indeed go from this purely psychological premise, via the mediating assertion that a miserably imperfect being could by no means put together so splendid a piece of mental furniture for himself, self, to the conclusion "that God, in creating me, placed this idea within me like the mark of the workman imprinted on his work." 4.4 This trademark argument appears the more plausible to Descartes because he has already satisfied himself that he is essentially an incorporeal conscious being: and, thanks to his early Jesuit training, he by second nature thinks of all human souls as specially created by God. The mediating assertion will be seen by us as a variation ation on what we have mischievously dubbed the My-best-friend-is-a-Jew-but a-Jew-but Gambit (3.26-3.27). A universal thesis is being pressed notwithstanding withstanding that the most prominent instance ostensibly constitutes a decisive falsification. For the fact that so inadequate a creature as Descartes possessed this magnificent idea of God would more reasonably ably be construed as an occasion for admitting that imperfect beings can form such an idea than for insisting on his own prejudice that they cannot. But to Descartes this insistence appeared as one among many instances of the application of what he mistook to be a self-evident and axiomatic principle of causation. (This principle, which has seemed, and still seems, self-evident to most natural theologians, Descartes formulated as one of the Axioms in a curious para-geometrical rical exercise attached to his answers to the second set of objections to his Meditations: "Reasons which establish the existence of God ... disposed in a geometrical fashion." This Axiom there reads: "Whatever ever reality or perfection exists in a thing is found formally or eminently nently in its first and total cause.") Since it too starts from what purport to be psychological facts this is a convenient occasion to mention, and dismiss, another and more fashionable type of appeal. C. G. Jung introduced an usage, which might be thought studiously obfuscating, whereby anything that people (or one person) very much wants or needs to believe is characterized as `psychologically true' (for him). Consequently, when in his later years Jung began to write about the psychology of astrology, alchemy, and religion his apercus were often-and perhaps pardonably-construed as lending whatever prestige Jungian analysis might have to these various activities. Despite Jung's own spasmodic warnings, inserted among books still written in an idiom perversely suggesting the contrary, many readers mistook it that he was urging: not merely the already sufficiently disputatious thesis that the ideas under discussion are for all men, and not just for neurotic Jungian

patients, `psychologically true' (i.e., tempting); but even that these ideas are, and are somehow shown by his psychology to be, actually true (i.e., true). We must never be misled, whether by Jung or by anyone else, into confounding psychological questions about the origin and appeal of beliefs with logical questions about their truth and grounds. 4.6 We now return from these rather shameful byways to the Ontological Argument itself. Its nerve is a move from idea to existence: tence: existence is supposed to be implied in the idea of a Perfect Being "in the same manner in which the equality of its three angles to two right angles is implied in the idea of a triangle." The move is mediated by the notion that existence is a perfection. This does not come out altogether clearly in the Discourse. But it is in fact supreme Perfection which is supposed to make the crucial difference. It is because the idea of God is the idea of a Perfect Being that Descartes considers that an argument from idea to existence is in this one most favored instance sound; notwithstanding that he himself is the first to urge that it certainly would not be valid in other cases, like that of the idea of a triangle. 4.7 The notion of an essential link between perfection and existence tence is not based simply on any crude appeal to the idea that what did not even exist must be a nonstarter as a Perfect Being. Rather it draws upon a very ancient tradition going right back through the Scholastics tics and the Neo-Platonists to the Plato of the Republic. This idea is part of a much larger burden which Descartes, for all his boldly professed fessed intentions of radical reconstruction, accepted from his Jesuit mentors without question. It is that goodness and being, if not perhaps haps wholly convertible and equivalent notions, are nevertheless so fundamentally and universally connected as to be always ultimately aspects of the same things. The fount of this tradition as of so much else in the history of ideas is found in the Republic, where the Form (Idea) of the God seems to be simultaneously that of the Real. The doctrine, which we met earlier (2.45), that evil is essentially a privation tion of good or a privation of being is an implicit corollary. 4.8 History is all very well. Great names are also all very well. But our problem is always whether an argument is, or could be made, sound. In any case nothing can be settled here by appeal to authority, for here as in religion itself the authorities disagree. Again, a historical ical perspective can be illuminating; but the illumination should be an illumination of the meanings of doctrines, and of their possible grounds. Nor must one ever forget that the great philosophers, unlike their annalists, were themselves concerned primarily not with what they happened to think but rather that they should think thoughts which were both soundly based and true. By this standard the Ontological logical Argument fails. For what at bottom is involved is an utterly misguided attempt to argue solely from the definition of a word to the real existence of a corresponding thing. 4.9 The qualification real is perhaps needed since the so-called existence theorems of mathematics have recently been summoned in aid of an egregious attempt to revive this argument. In fact, of course, they bear if anywhere in the opposite direction; since, as parts of pure mathematics, they are not proofs of the actual existence of anything, but only and properly of the freedom from contradiction of concepts. (See Malcolm [1] especially pp. 52 ff: compare critics in the same volume, also Baier [2]. If it really were, as Malcolm apparently thinks, a corollary of the later philosophy of Wittgenstein that the existence of God could be deduced merely from some alleged facts of verbal usage, this would surely constitute a reduction to absurdity of that philosophy: a conclusion very far indeed from the intentions of so devoted voted a disciple [8.34].) 4.10 That the Ontological Argument does involve a luminously illegitimate attempt to deduce actual existence from the mere definition tion of a word becomes most clear when its structure is represented in the Formal Mode

of Speech (2.32). Say, if you like, that by the word God we are to mean "a Perfect Being"; and then go on, if you must, to gloss this Perfect as itself meaning-among other things "possessing the perfection of existence." Maneuver how you wish and for as long as you like with the definition. Still you will not have taken one single step toward establishing that there actually is any being such that the word so defined can there correctly be applied. On the contrary, if anything: for with specifications in definitions, as with qualifications in other spheres, the more you decide to require the less likely you are to discover acceptable candidates. 4.11 In this case your further trouble comes from listing existence tence as one of your defining characteristics, even the main one. This is at least odd, perhaps logically vicious. For even if it were in the end correct to rate existence as some sort of characteristic, it is certainly not just one among others. For instance, to borrow G. E. Moore's now famous example, with other grammatically appropriate terms you can significantly if not truly say that some tame tigers do it and some do not. But it makes no sense at all to say that some tame tigers exist, and some do not (Moore). Actual existence is a condition of actually possessing any (other) characteristic. Hence the logical symbolism bolism introduced by Russell and Whitehead in their epoch-making Principia Mathematica provides specially for a fundamental distinction between existential assertions and all others. Not only, therefore, is it manifestly preposterous to try to deduce the existence of a thing simply from the definition of a word, it is also for the same reason absurd to insert an existence clause into a specification of meaning. 4.12 If the nerve of the Ontological Argument is indeed so preposterous, posterous, the question must arise how so many philosophers of the highest caliber have come to believe that it is sound. This is not a purely antiquarian question. For, generally, when one rejects any widely or respectably held view one needs to ask why so many or such considerable people have been misled into what is, apparently, error; and until and unless satisfactory answers are forthcoming one is not entitled to feel entirely sure that it is an error at all or, if an error, that it is just a straightforward error and nothing more. 4.13 Here the first, but not the most important, part of the answer lies in the difference between a good and a bad terminology (2.32). We have already, in chapter 2, maintained repeatedly, and illustrated, trated, the importance of marking sharply the fundamental distinction between questions about the meanings of words and questions about what Hume called matters "of fact and real existence." The story of the Ontological Argument provides yet another illustration. If you think in terms of the idea of a Perfect Being, and of what is implied thereby, then it must be appreciably easier for you to reach the mistaken taken conclusion that this idea itself somehow guarantees the real existence of its appropriate object. Similarly, to the extent that, with Aquinas, you insist on speaking of the answer to the question `What is-?' [quid est] as the essence of a thing rather than as the definition of a word, it must become to you proportionately less implausible to talk of God's essence as necessarily involving-or being-existence (2.19): notwithstanding that, like Aquinas, you have elsewhere yourself self forcefully urged the invalidity of the Ontological Argument, as presented explicitly (4.1). 4.14 Therefore let no one underestimate the value of a good symbolism. Two instructive exercises are, first to try, entirely in Roman numerals and with no abacus or similar aid, simple sums with large numbers, and then to attend to an elementary chemical argument ment developed wholly in words, without benefit of the usual notation. tion. In thinkers of the front rank obviously there had to be more to it than this. There was; even if the more makes it no better. Some of the extraordinary story is excitingly told in that classic of the history of ideas, A. O. Lovejoy's The Great Chain of Being. We have space to

mention only the main attraction, that the argument sprang from, and indeed was, the concept of God as a logically necessary being. The appeal of this is that it appears to some to provide simultaneously both the greatest possible glorification of God and an ultimate explanation which is inherently final. A grotesque illustration of the first kind of appeal is found in that already mentioned latest revival (4.9). For there Malcolm quotes Psalm 40: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting lasting thou art God." What is grotesque about this is that Malcolm is so insensitive to all considerations of historical context that he would apparently have us interpret the splendid eloquence of the psalmist as an expression "of the idea of the [logically] necessary existence tence ... of God, an idea that is essential to the Jewish and Christian religions" (Malcolm [1], pp. 55-56). Any such idea is, of course, totally alien to the spirit of the writers of the Old Testament; and hence to the original traditions of orthodox Judaism. It belongs rather, though it may not be essential, to the mainstream of Catholic Christian tian theology (Mascall [1], pp. 30 f£): which is itself the hybrid offspring spring of an unnatural marriage between the metaphysics of the Greeks and the religion of Israel (Lovejoy, passim). 4.16 The second sort of appeal leads us on to another argument. The nature of the attraction comes out well in Leibniz. He urges that there must be a sufficient reason for the existence of the universe, and that this cannot be found in any collection of contingent truths which describe it: "The sufficient reason which has no need of any other reason must be outside the sequence of contingent things, and must be a necessary being, else we should not have a sufficient reason with which we could stop" (Leibniz [2], § 8: cf. 2.49, above). This Argument from Contingency, which we shall have later to distinguish from another in Aquinas to which the same label is often attached (4.23) differs fers from the Ontological Argument. Whereas this Argument from Contingency would proceed from the universe of contingent facts to the supposed logically Necessary Being, that tried to move from the putatively legitimate idea of such a Being to its actual existence. Again, whereas that might-wrongly but understandably-be waved aside as of exclusively antiquarian interest, this is something definitely in present circulation. It was, for instance, the first candidate proof offered by Father Copleston S.J. in the celebrated broadcast discussion with Bertrand Russell on `The Existence of God' (Russell, pp. 145 ff.). 4.17 The first comment is to insist again that the idea of God as a logically Necessary Being is not, whatever else it is, Biblical. Nor, save through some eternity-serving metaphysical equation between goodness and reality, can it be derived from our studiously minimal definition (2.7-2.9). It is a notion of which a believer free of any Scholastic commitments might gladly disembarrass himself. For to jettison this is certainly not thereby to lose the right to say that your God is the Creator, and hence the contingently indispensable foundation tion of the universe; nor to eschew the contention that statements of his ultimate will-as opposed to those expressing what he tolerates only as logically necessary means-are as a matter of contingent fact the last word in explanation (Penelhum, § 4: cf. 2.46-242, above). 4.18 The second comment refers to the nature of explanation why something is so. At every successive stage this involves showing how what is to be explained is a case of or can be derived from a wider regularity or set of regularities. Suppose that we notice, and are puzzled zled by, the fact that the new white paint above our gas cooker quickly turns a dirty brown. The first stage is to discover that this is what always happens, with that sort of stove, and that kind of paint. Pressing our questions to a second stage we learn that this phenomenon enon is to be explained by reference to certain deeper and wider regularities ularities of chemical

combination: the sulphur in the gas fumes forms a compound with something in the paint. Driving on still further we are led to see the squalor in our kitchen as, in the circumstances, one of the innumerable consequences of the truth of an all-embracing atomic-molecular theory of the structure of matter. And so on. At every stage explanation is in terms of something else which, at that stage, has to be accepted as a brute fact. In some further stage that fact itself may be explained; but still in terms of something else which, at least temporarily, has simply to be accepted (Hospers). It would therefore fore seem to be a consequence of the essential nature of explanation that, however much may ultimately be explained in successive stages of inquiry, there must always be some facts which have simply to be accepted with what Samuel Alexander used to call "natural piety." It is often thought, by naturalists as well as by theists, that it is an unavoidable able defect in every naturalistic system, and one which-if only it happened pened to be true-theism could remedy, that in any such naturalistic system the most fundamental laws of matter and energy cannot be susceptible of any further explanation. Yet this is not, if the system is true, a defect; nor is it one which, even if theism were true, theism could remedy. For it is not a contingent fact about one sort of system, but a logical truth about all explanations of facts. The ultimate facts about God would have to be, for precisely the same reason, equally inexplicable. In each and every case we must necessarily find at the end of every explanatory road some ultimates which have simply to be accepted as the fundamental truths about the way things are. And this itself is a contention, not about the lamentable contingent facts of the human condition, but about what follows necessarily from the nature of explanation. Yet if it is correct the famous Principle of Sufficient Reason, the principle that there must be a sufficient reason to explain everything thing that happens, is not merely false but demonstrably false. The Argument from Contingency can fruitfully be seen as an attempt to avoid precisely this consequence; especially since the Principle of Sufficient ficient Reason, variously interpreted, was the great watchword of Leibniz. But as Kant contended, although not exactly for his reason, this argument must fall with the Ontological (Kant, § A603: compare J. J. C. Smart, pp. 3 5 ff.). If the nerve of the Ontological Argument is unsound then the idea of a logically Necessary Being, which just is that nerve, must by the same token be equally unsound. And the unsoundness of that argument we have tried to display already (4.9-4.11). 4.20 There seems little which can usefully be added to that demonstration now. For the fallacy involved in the Ontological Argument ment is-if once that argument is spelled out definitely and in a satisfactory factory terminology-so glaring that it is hard to see how any further direct approach could be more helpful. It is well to emphasize generally ally that parenthetical condition: any argument can be made to appear immune to refutation if it is not stated in a way which is sufficiently determinate and consistent to permit criticism. More particularly, the present is a classic instance of the importance of the difference between tween illuminating and obscuring terminologies. It is, surely, as we suggested earlier (4.13-4.14), to the persistence of the latter that in some part we owe the persistence of the fallacy of the Ontological Argument among thinkers who believe that they have rejected it. Yet by a curious double effect it seems that it may be precisely those logical ical peculiarities of the concept of existence, which should by rights lead to the total rejection of that argument, which in fact also help to generate the idea that there is some deep mystery about existence as such, and thus to soften up some hearers to receive with reverence pretentious but empty incantations about the identity in God of Essence and Existence. 4.20 Before going on to the next set of arguments let us conclude the present section piously, by indicating the

position taken upon this historic battleground by Aristotle. He has been sometimes blamed for, or credited with, too much. Schopenhauer shall be our guide. He points out a passage in the PosteriorAnalytics: "the being of everything must be proved-unless indeed to be were its essence; and, since being is not a genus, it is not the essence of anything" (92B 12-14). Existence-to put it less succinctly, less technically, and less precisely-is cisely-is not a characteristic, which could form part (or the whole) of the definition of anything. The comment is cruel: it is "as if he could detect this piece of Scholastic jugglery through the shades of coming darkness, and wished to bar the road to it" (Schopenhauer, § 7). 4.21 The first three of the Five Ways can be tackled as a group. Number one, which Thomas described as the more manifest, starts from the fact of change or motion, and speedily reaches "the First Mover set in motion by no other; and this everyone understands to be God." Number two begins with the "order of efficient causes" and hastens to the conclusion that "we must postulate a First Efficient Cause, which all men term God." Number three opens: "We observe in nature things which have the possibility of existence or non-existence; tence; when, that is, certain things are found to be generated or corrupted rupted and, consequently, may be or not be." The upshot is that "it is necessary to postulate something which is necessary in itself, which does not derive its cause of necessity from elsewhere, but which is cause of the necessity in other things" (Aquinas [2], I [ii] 3: the zestful rendering given in Father Thomas Gilby's popular book of Aquinas readings is, I am afraid, shaped rather by the misconception discussed in paragraph 4.23 than by the Latin original). 4.22 One thing to get straight right away is that these arguments are not supposed to be leading us necessarily to the first term in a temporal poral succession. Aquinas insisted, and upon this point he was consistent, tent, that we cannot prove by natural reason that the universe had a beginning (Aquinas [2], I [xlvi] 2: compare 2.34 above). It has sometimes times been argued, and indeed Aquinas has sometimes been represented, sented, even by devoutly favorable expositors, as himself arguing that there must be (have been?) a First Cause, because every event has a cause, and the precession of causes could not go back forever. This disgraceful argument is outstanding among fallacies: not merely does the conclusion not follow from the premises; it actually contradicts one of them, while they each contradict the other. Thomas avoids this catastrophe because his First Mover, First Cause, and Prime Necessary sary Being are all conceived as situated at the apex of hierarchies, rather than at the beginning of temporal series. The argument is, not that a process must have a start, but that a hierarchy must have a summit. Interpreters frequently suggest that we should think in terms of a diagram: in which the temporal succession of events is represented sented by a horizontal line; and the Divine support and inspiration indicated by verticals. This image can be very helpful in countering the misconception that Thomas is trying to argue to God as the beginning term in temporal series `within' the universe. It is perhaps rather less apt for bringing out that these arguments were, as was suggested gested at the beginning of the present chapter (4.1), all intended to show that the universe could not exist in its own right, but must at all times be totally dependent on its Creator; and hence that they were all intended to defeat the Stratonician presumption. 4.23 A second, and very pardonable, misconception which has to be removed immediately concerns the idea of necessary being involved in the third argument. It is not the one previously discussed, where the necessity involved is logical and where this supposed super existence is taken to be the unique prerogative of God (Geach and Brown [2]). As we hinted by inserting the word Prime, God is not, in the present sense, regarded as the sole necessary being. There are the heavenly bodies, human

souls, and angels too. (It should not, by the way, be overlooked that Aquinas offers besides the Five Ways what he takes to be proofs of the existence of angels: Aquinas [2], I [1] 1 ff.) The clue to the relevant sense lies in the phrase "found to be generated ated or corrupted," with its Aristotelian echoes. The idea is that necessary essary beings are somehow inherently incapable of growth or decay: they can, Aquinas would add, only be created or annihilated. So, the argument runs, whereas beings that are not in this Aristotelian sense necessary could not have survived without some actual necessary being, even necessary beings require a cause, in the hierarchical order, of their very necessity. Interpreted in this way it is, of course, immune to the objections deployed against the Ontological Argument and the Argument from Contingency; albeit that, as has been suggested, its author cannot perhaps himself escape them. If the interpretation is correct one should pause for a moment to reflect on how many have been misled, by what they took to be the authority of Aquinas, into receiving and advocating something which the saint himself rejected categorically; if not-in our view-consistently. 4.24 A third thing to remember is that these and similar arguments ments were put up by Aquinas and, with relatively minor repairs and alterations, are still regularly presented today not as intellectual curiosities, nor yet even as pointers merely toward the humanly unknowable, but as clearly decisive proofs of fact. A typical popular manual offers "a natural theology on the mediaeval model, proceeding ceeding on grounds of objective logic and metaphysics and asserting the existence of God as a hard fact to be acknowledged by reason without any support other than honest and accurate thinking." The same author goes so far as to say-with a confidence in Infallible generalities eralities which nobody, surely, is bound to believe need apply with equal certainty to his own particular specimens (1.7)-that "we make no profession of providing proofs which no one can decline to accept; we merely claim to offer reasoning which is in itself logically demonstrative, strative, and that should be enough" (Hawkins, pp. 14 and 12). Nor is such confidence confined to popular manuals. A leading Roman Catholic logician introduces his illuminating account of the Five Ways by describing these exercises as, without qualification, "proving the existence of God"; and he later speaks of Aquinas as "having thus established the existence of a God who is the cause of the world and of the processes in it" (Geach, pp. 109 and 117) 4.25 Prepared by these three warnings we come down to detail. Number two will probably appear the most immediately intelligible and forceful to the modern student, not soaked in the background ideas of Aristotelian metaphysics. It reads: "We discover in phenomena nomena an order of efficient causes. But we do not find, what is not possible, anything which is an efficient cause of itself; because such a thing would be prior to itself, which is impossible. It is also impossible to go on to infinity with efficient causes; because in an ordered series of efficient causes the first is the cause of the one in the middle and the one in the middle is the cause of the last, whether or not these intermediates are one or many. Take away the cause, and you take away the effect. Therefore if there were not a first there would not be a last or any in the middle ... which is plainly not the case. Therefore we must postulate a First Efficient Cause; which all men name God" (Aquinas [2], I [ii] 3). 4.26 Once it is appreciated, with some difficulty, that none of this is even supposed to apply to causes in the ordinary temporal succession sion it will become clear that this argument, like the most sophisticated cated versions of the Argument to Design, is safely beyond the reach of science. But, as usual, security is bought only at a price. For both the acceptability of the premise, and whatever force the arguments may seem to possess, surely derive from pedestrian and rejected interpretations. pretations. We can scarcely refuse to grant, with

perhaps some fastidious qualifications, that we do "discover in phenomena an order of efficient causes": so long, that is, as this is the familiar order of temporal poral succession. But what this argument requires is an order which, if temporal at all and not purely hierarchical, is of simultaneous conditions. ditions. The causal chains needed here have to hang, as it were, at right angles to, and also to be additional to, those stretching backward into the past and forward into the future. They have to be not originating nating causes (causae in fieri) but standing conditions (causae in esse). Perhaps the nearest thing we have to what Aquinas wants would be a series of standing conditions arranged as an explanatory hierarchy; and this, as we shall see later (4.39), can scarcely lead to the destination tion wished. (The qualification efficient to characterize causes has been deliberately dropped, as well it may be. It serves only to distinguish what is normally now simply a cause from the objects of three other sorts of inquiry classed together by Aristotle under a Greek word usually, ally, not always happily, rendered cause.) 4.27 But it is only and precisely insofar as we continue to think in the familar terms of temporally successive links in causal chains that the argument has the momentum to carry us along. Yet to reach the desired conclusion Aquinas has to insist, going directly against his own original line of advance, that there now has to be, what he so acutely appreciated that there did not have to be in the familiar case, a first term. Certainly we can allow that we do in fact "discover in phenomena nomena an order of efficient causes": notwithstanding that we have learned from Hume that Every event must have a cause is not, unlike Every effect must have a cause, logically necessary. But it is not obvious at all-it is indeed exactly what is supposed to be being proved-that in addition to causes in the order of temporal succession all things (all things `in the universe') require a sustaining cause. Again, consider the claim that "we do not find, what is not possible, anything which is an efficient cause of itself." This is made to appear more compulsive than it is by talking not of an uncaused cause but of one "which is an efficient cient cause of itself." Since, as Aquinas would be the first to agree, causes must necessarily be if not temporally at least in some other way prior to their effects, this representation makes out, what is not the case, that the idea of an uncaused cause involves a logical contradiction. tradiction. That this is not so is something which Aquinas will himself be wanting to allow, all of three or four sentences later, in concluding that "we must postulate a First Efficient Cause." The situation is made, if possible, even worse if with some you insist on going on, usually in wanton Latin, to say that God is cause of himself. Having already underlined that you take the expression to be contradictory, by this further move you go out of your way to introduce that selfsame contradiction tradiction into your concept of God. In short: we have here no lever adequate to prise the Stratonician from his lodgement; no launching pad of fact, and no force of argument, sufficient to project us outside the universe into the theologian's not-space beyond the stars. 4.28 A slightly different approach leads to a similar conclusion. Geach urges helpfully "that what is in fact essential to the `Five Ways' is something tantamount to treating the world as a great big object. ... If the world is an object, it seems natural to ask about it the sort of causal questions which would be legitimate about its parts" (Geach, p. 112). Then, after pointing a contrast between Kant and Aquinas, the same interpreter goes on to say of Aquinas: "What would have appeared to him not worth discussion at all is the idea that, though we can speak without contradiction of the world as a whole, we cannot raise concerning it the sort of causal questions that we can raise concerning cerning its parts." If the only objections were those which Geach proceeds ceeds to dismiss, such aloofness might be justified "It would be childish to say that the world is too big for such questions

to be reasonable; sonable; and to say that the world is all-inclusive, would be to beg the question-God would not be included in the world" (Geach, p. 113). But this is to make things extremely easy for the natural theologian: far too easy. As so often the most powerful attack comes from Hume. (Perhaps this is an underlying reason for the ostentatious contempt for him shown by those inclined to elevate Aristotle, Aquinas, Frege, and Wittgenstein into Four Great Doctors of a philosophical church?) 4.29 Hume makes first a point put already: "in tracing an eternal succession of objects, it seems absurd to inquire for a general cause or first Author. How can anything, that exists from eternity, have a cause, since that relation implies a priority in time and a beginning of existence?" tence?" In the following paragraph, with a succinctness to match that of Thomas's original statement, Hume makes his second point: "In such a chain too, or succession of objects, each part is caused by that which preceded it, and causes that which succeeds it. Where then is the difficulty? But the WHOLE, you say, wants a cause.... Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable, should you afterwards ask me, what was the cause of the whole twenty" (Hume [3], part IX). This second point can be fixed in mind by a New Yorker's impish illustration. There are five Eskimos on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Fiftieth Street: suppose the presence of each is independently ently explained, then there is no call for a further explanation of the presence of the five considered as a group (P. Edwards [1]). The two objections together are Scylla and Charybdis: insofar as causal explanation nation is interpreted ordinarily, the `vertical dimension' appears to be superfluous; while to the extent that some more exotic construction is provided, the quest for causes in this new sense cannot legitimately inherit the compulsiveness of the more workaday kind of inquiry. 4.30 With appropriate alterations the same considerations can be brought to bear against the other two arguments of this group. For a full secondary account of way one which Thomas thought "the more manifest," and for discussion from a Thomist standpoint, the reader can refer, for instance, to Mascall's He Who Is and to the further sources cited there. Way three involving necessary beings, is surely too dependent on prior acceptance, of certain distinctively Aristotelian totelian categories to be regarded now as a real addition to the armory. Its apparent continuing popularity depends upon its being almost universally mistaken for what we have labeled the Argument from Contingency: what is often called the Cosmological Argument. 4.31 Way one had a wryly interesting ancestry, which perhaps deserves a brief parenthetical mention (4.31-4.32). The first father was, apparently, Plato; and the source is book 10 of his last work The Laws. He there becomes perhaps the first to offer such `proofs.' The key idea, sketched earlier in the Phaedrus, is that of "the motion which can move itself." This is equated with life or soul. The conclusion which emerges is that "all the stars and the moon ... the years and months and all seasons ... are all caused by one or more souls, which are good also with all goodness. . . ." The lawgivers "shall declare these souls to be gods, whether it be that they order the whole heaven by residing in bodies, as living creatures, or whatever the mode and method" (899B). Whatever else it may be this is manifestly not the monotheism of Israel: these prime movers themselves move (896A); and they are supposed to be more than one (896E). So it is with at least a verbal appropriateness that Plato quotes Thales: "All things are full of gods." 4.32 Aristotle replaces this haunted universe with something characteristically more systematic, in which he thinks to give a `vertical' tical' account of motion in terms of his own suggestion of the mover not itself moving. The issue between this aspiration and the Stratonician cian presumption is focused by his contempt

for the atomists Democritus ocritus and Leucippus, who would appear to have thought-as well they might-that the `horizontal' explanations of science would be enough. In the words of From Religion to Philosophy, another of the classics of the history of ideas: "Aristotle, with his theistic prejudices, complains that to dismiss the question of the origin of motion was a piece of `slackness"' (Cornford, p. 156). But, as we have already seen (4.18), it need not have been any sort of slackness. It may have been shrewd and profound, if the reason for the dismissal was that Democritus ocritus and Leucippus had recognized that whatever are the most fundamental damental characteristics of the most fundamental particles must as such be incapable of further explanation. 4.33 Plato follows his natural theology with prescriptions of punishments ishments for heresy; being it seems, realistically, unable to believe that his arguments were sufficient to convince even all disinterested inquirers (908B-909A). So the disciple of Socrates in his old age becomes the first thinker to propose that alleged theological error, as opposed to insuits to an established worship, should be treated as a crime against the state. Nor is to mention this to try unfairly to incriminate Aquinas by association. For Aquinas was no less sure that heretics must be "shut off from the world by death" (Aquinas [2],11-2 [xi] 3-4: such passages, which are of course integral to his work, are nowadays not proudly paraded in countries with liberal traditions. The two-volume Random House edition of his Basic Writings by A. C. Pegis finds it convenient to break off at Question seven.) 4.34 Returning from asides about the history and imposition of ideas to the substantive issues of natural theology, the next thing to notice is that most of the arguments so far considered in the present chapter are along with many others often regarded as so many variations tions upon one single basic theme. This can be a helpful frame of reference, erence, especially when one underlines, as we have been doing (4.1, 4.22, etc.), that the overriding aim is to defeat the Stratonician presumption. sumption. In chapter 3 we chose to treat as varieties of the Argument to Design, both the most sophisticated attempts to move to an Orderer from any sort of order, and more or less naive inferences to Contrivance trivance operating in the gaps in current scientific knowledge. It is similarly ilarly useful now to think of both the Argument from Contingency, in which contingent and necessary are both logical terms (4.16-4.20), and the first three of the Five Ways (4.21-4.29), possibly even the fifth too (3.3), as all versions of one Cosmological Argument. What these and other varieties have in common is that they are all attempts to go from finite, limited, conditioned existence to an infinite and unconditioned Creator upon whom all this allegedly dependent being supposedly depends. (For another discussion, but from a similar standpoint, see Hepburn [1], chap. 9-10; and compare Martin, chap. 9.) 4.35 In the Cosmological Argument thus comprehensively interpreted preted we surely touch one of the roots of theism, for the ideas involved are accepted as fundamental by many who have few illusions about the validity of the argument. Crombie provides an especially interesting example. Not only is he obviously not one of those who write, or wish they might, as if Hume had never lived, or had published lished nothing but A Treatise of Human Nature. He is also fairly unusual, as we indicated earlier (2.20), in realizing that the theist has to show how the intended object of his assertions could be identified. Crombie, being an Anglican and quite untroubled by the definitions of the First Vatican Council (1.7), is happy to reject the claim of natural ural theology to prove the existence of God: "What however the arguments of the natural theologians do do is reveal the intellectual pressures which lead people to talk about God; and, in so doing, they illuminate the meaning of such talk." Crombie's proposal is to argue: that "the conception of the divine is indeed in one sense an empty notion; but it is the

notion of a complement which could fill in certain deficiencies in our experience, that could not be filled in by further experience or theory-making; and its positive content is simply the idea of something (we know not what) which might supply those deficiencies" ciencies" (Crombie, p. 56: compare pp. 62-67; also Otto, passim). 4.36 So long as the claim is only that the Cosmological Argument cannot provide a proof, well and fine. The trouble begins with the suggestions gestions that God might in principle be identified by reference to the gaps which, if he existed, he would fill. For, obviously, to satisfy the theologian ologian the gaps will have to be not just felt or apparent but real and genuine. The identification problem cannot be solved to his satisfaction faction so long as it is possible that these putative gaps are merely the bogus resultants of radically incompatible longings: like that perennially ally unfilled market niche for the family car which is much bigger inside than out. Even if it can be shown that the Cosmological Argument does serve as a marker for some needs which could in principle be satisfied, we are still of course not advanced a step toward furnishing any reason for thinking that the object required does actually exist. The rather modest most which will have been established is that the concept of God is, at least in this aspect, the concept of something which conceivably ceivably could exist. We shall have reached as a conclusion what in most other lesser cases can readily be granted from the beginning. 4.37 It is not entirely clear how, or indeed that, even this modest feat is possible. For to the extent that the needs to be met by the proposed posed conclusion to the Cosmological Argument are precisely formulated lated they tend to appear as either insatiable in principle or as possibly to be met within the universe. Neither alternative should be acceptable able to the theologian: the former because it constitutes a reduction to absurdity of (this part of) his concept of God; the latter because nothing which could be found within the universe, and no more, would be what he wants for, or of, his God. Furthermore, insofar as the Cosmological Argument really is, as many theists suggest, fundamental mental to natural theology-and hence to rational theism-to understand stand the dynamics of the thought movements here will be to appreciate preciate at the same time why it may not after all be easy for them to cut completely free from the vicious principle of the Ontological Argument (4.17). For, as we have seen (4.16-4.20), the Argument from Contingency-perhaps the most popular variety of the Cosmological logical Argument-depends upon precisely that principle. The great attraction to the natural theologian of the Argument from Contingency gency lies in the fact that, if once he is allowed that sort of contrast between contingent and necessary being, then contingent beings do immediately appear to be, as required, inherently deficient. The whole world of might-not-have-beens may then perhaps seem "suppliant pliant for its existence" upon a logically necessary God; whose being is part of, or is, his essence (M. C. D'Arcy, p. 59). 4.38 This attraction is so great that it constantly beguiles many of those who have, for the soundest reasons, shown the Ontological Argument out of the front door into readmitting it, very thinly disguised, guised, by the back entrance. It is so great that it seems to have power to blind its victims to all the incongruities of their attempt to synthesize size such a God of would-be rational theology with the agent Will of the Jahweh of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. For how-as Santayana once asked, rather less appropriately, of Plato's Form of the Good and the Real-can Pure Being "issue particular commands, or be an acrimonious monious moralist?" (Quoted Lovejoy, p. 39). These are incongruities and worse than incongruities to which one has to strive to become sensitive against the grain of centuries of familiarity. We noticed earlier lier Malcolm's bizarre insistence on pinning upon the psalmist the metaphysical monstrosity of a logically necessary God

(4.15). A similar ilar oddity shows up clearly in Geach. After expounding the Five Ways-and, incidentally, most carefully avoiding the usual confusion of the third with what we are calling the Argument from Contingency-he gency-he apparently assents to the estimate that Aquinas has "thus established the existence of a God who is the cause of the world and of the processes in it." This Creator God apparently also "envisages such a world and chooses that it should be." So no doubt it would be right to draw the consequence that "the God of whom natural theology ology apprises us is frightening." But how do we make the step to: "What if God should will that this miserably wicked race should utterly destroy itself?" (Geach, pp. 117, 120 and 125)? For no reason of natural theology seems to have been given for thus suggesting that the postulated Maker and Preserver of all things must nevertheless somehow be thought to favor some aspects of his creation as against others. It is indeed hard to see how there could be such a reason (2.34 if. and 5.18). 4.39 Suppose now that, discerning the fatal form of the Ontological ical Argument behind that from Contingency, the theologian reverts to other versions of the Cosmological. He seizes on the familiar and seemingly promising concept of causation, of which motion or change can here be regarded as a special case. The backward series does not, he realizes, have to have a first term; he realizes, have to have a first term; and, even if it did, the first cause in this series would have to count as part of the universe, which is not at all what is wanted to say nothing of the further, theologically equally unacceptable, consequence that his approach would leave our first parents nearer to God than any of their descendants. Then what about the ‘vertical’ dimension? Perhaps we can argue that things have to have not merely originating causes but also background conditions, which can then be rated as sustaining causes. Maybe we can proceed by this route up to a First Cause. (Or should it be down, or out, or across; or all yet none of these at once?) a contemporary US manual of thomism argues: "each member of the series of causes possesses being solely by virtue of the actual present operation of a superior cause.... life is dependent ... on a certain atmospheric pressure, this again on the continual operation tion of physical forces, whose being and operation depends on the position of the earth in the solar system, which itself must endure relatively atively unchanged, a state of being which can only be continuously produced by a definite-if unknown-constitution of the material universe." we seem to be doing splendidly. but so far this is only the count down. the test begins at blast-off. we continue: "this constitution, tution, however, cannot be its own cause. that a thing should cause itself is impossible: for in order that it may cause it is necessary for it to exist, which it cannot do, on the hypothesis, until it has been caused.... we are thus irresistibly led to posit a first efficient cause which, while itself uncaused, shall impart causality to a whole series" (r. p. phillips, i pp. 284-85). 4.41 we are not. for whatever right we have to start this progress imposes a corresponding obligation not to stop arbitrarily: "we cannot use the causal law as if it were a sort of cab, to be dismissed when we have reached our destination" (schopenhauer, § 20). the driving force of the whole argument is that initial insistence that "each member of the series of causes possesses being solely by the actual present operation of a superior cause." yet no reason is given why the "first efficient cause" postulated in the conclusion should be thus granted exemption: being privileged to be "itself uncaused." the point is one taken from the opposite end, from the opposite camp, and in a different context by newman: "it is to me a perplexity that grave authors seem to enunciate as an intuitive truth, that everything must have a cause. if this were so, the voice of nature would tell false; for why in that case stop short at one, who is himself without cause" (newman [2], iv [i] 5). 4.42 a key term in the phillips arguments is

superior. the only warrant for inserting it is to indicate that we are dealing with a logical hierarchy: explanations at every level are in terms of facts of greater generality than those being there explained. if when you use this term you are also thinking of god as the supreme being-what is, so to speak, inherently the mostest-then it becomes easy to slide into thinking that god is the inevitable senior member completing every hierarchy. but this particular logical hierarchy is, as we have seen (4.18), one which-notwithstanding that it has to have, at the end of every successful stage in inquiry, some senior member-not merely has not but could not have one particular individual marked out in advance of all inquiry who inevitably must occupy the topmost place. 4.43 confronted with this objection the theologian has his choice; either he can plump for a god whose sheer will lies, purely as a matter of brute fact, at the end of every explanatory road; or he can opt again for the idea that there is some intrinsic necessity, independent pendent of what god may happen to want, why god has to be the mostest in all such series. if he takes the former, then he sacrifices the present sort of argument. there is no logically necessary reason why the explanatory series should not have had to stop with the most general eral laws of matter, but in fact it does not, because these arrangements happen to be god's work. if he takes the latter, then he has his argument, ment, but it is a version of the argument from contingency. not only is this precisely what he has been trying to avoid, because of its fatal link with the ontological. it also looks as if it would be-to put it cautiously-hard tiously-hard to reconcile with the traditional christian insistence that the creation is a gratuitous expression of god's will, and not a product of any necessity inherent in his nature (Lovejoy, passim). it appears, therefore, that we are no nearer finding any valid form of cosmological argument. nor will anything which has emerged so far serve even crombie's relatively modest needs. for the deficiency required by the argument from contingency is not in fact a remediable insufficiency in things. so we are no nearer to discovering a radical inadequacy which might be complemented by a being `outside' side' the universe; nor, consequently, have we made the promised progress toward filling up with meaning what "is indeed in one sense an empty notion." there remains the question: "why should anything exist at all?" some philosophers, such as schopenhauer, have thought of this as an expression of the primal metaphysical urge: "not how the world is, but that it is, is the mystical" (wittgenstein [1], § 6.44). 4.45 certainly this question seems to provide much of the steam behind the cosmological argument. certainly too it is a question demanding some special sort of answer from `outside' the universe, and it is the existence and direction of such an answer which every version of that argument attempts to show. it is precisely these common factors which led us to tackle what could be regarded as several eral versions of one fundamental type of argument in the same single chapter. but where, if anywhere, is this supposed to get us? if it is to be a proper question, and not-say-a grammatically misleading expression of the will to profundity, than we have to have some determinate minate idea of what sort of answer would be satisfactory. also, if the question makes any assumptions, some reason has to be given for thinking that these in fact hold. when the demand for precisification is pressed it seems that this limiting question will have to be explicated, cated, either as made to measure for an answer in terms of a logically necessary being, or as a request to be informed of some further logically ically contingent fact, but of a sort felt by the questioner to be somehow less brute than any law-no matter how wide its range merely `within' the universe. if this is wrong then it is up to the spokesmen for the question to enlighten us. but if, as it surely is, it is fundamentally right, then this is one of the cases where a clear light is cruel. for of the two presuppositions the first is, as we

have seen, logically ically vicious; while the second seems to be nothing more than a bit of wishfulness chastely parading in a muddle about explanation.

Logical Point of View: Nine Logico-Philosophical Essays by Willard Van Orman Quine

As an empiricist I continue to think of the conceptual scheme of science as a tool, ultimately, for predicting future experience in the light of past experience. Physical objects are conceptually imported into the situation as convenient intermediaries-not by definition in terms of experience, but simply as irreducible posits comparable, epistemologically, to the gods of Homer. For my part I do, qua lay physicist, believe in physical objects and not in Homer's gods; and I consider it a scientific error to believe otherwise. But in point of epistemological footing the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conception only as cultural posits. The myth of physical objects is epistemologically superior to most in that it has proved more efficacious than other myths as a device for working a manageable structure into the flux of experience."

The Fallacy of the "20th Century Atheist Regimes" by Hugh Harris

Straw Man: 20th Century Atheist regimes are responsible for the worst massacres in history.

This argument has become a thought-terminating cliché which serves both as a cautionary tale of what happens when we turn away from God, and also as an attempt to equal the ledger in discussions relating to religious violence.

Its key premise erroneously presupposes we accept that atheism was pivotal in causing violence in the fascist and communist regimes of the 20th century. Accordingly, "atheistic regimes" are supposedly an example of the dangers of "atheism" in practice. Where we might have previously said, Communist Regimes, or Totalitarian Regimes, for the purposes of argument we rebrand them Atheistic Regimes, employing a rather transparent form of Humpty-Dumptyism in order to pin the blame on atheism. The argument is used as a return argument, a tu quoque fallacy, to divert attention from religious violence.

Nazi Germany

First, as an absolute knockdown Nazi Germany was not even an atheist state. Germany was a 95% Christian country when it went to war in 1939. As Christopher Hitchens was fond of pointing out, the first Treaty signed by the Nazi regime was with the Catholic Church exchanging political influence for control of German education. Hitler ascribed his victories to divine Providence, and encouraged his own personal deification. Soldiers had "Gott mit uns" ("God with us") inscribed on their belt buckles, and party members took the following oath under God: "I swear in the name of almighty God, my loyalty to the Fuhrer." Hitler was explicit: Nazi Germany was, and would always be, a Christian nation.

Historians, such as biographer John Toland, cite Hitler's Catholic background as having an influence on his fervent anti-Semitism. Following meetings with Hitler, General Gerhard Engel

and Cardinal Michael von Faulhaber wrote that Hitler was a believer in God. The references to Hitler's contempt for Christianity in the memoirs of some of his confidantes seem to be the root of the association of Nazism with nonbelief. However, these references are at odds with his public announcements and the memories of some of his other contemporaries. Although his personal religious views varied throughout his life, Nazi public policy contained a consistent commitment to Christianity. The Party developed Positive Christianity which involved a hard line reinterpretation of Scripture that was particularly anti-Semitic with a trajectory towards deifying the Fuhrer himself who was said by Hanns Kerrl, Reichsminister of Church Affairs, to be the "herald of a new revelation."

Hence today I believe that I am acting in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator: by defending myself against the Jew, I am fighting for the work of the Lord. (Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, Ralph Manheim, ed., New York, 1998, p. 65)

Hitler did not act alone. Using propaganda he fanned the flames of popular Christian anti-Semitism, and promoted a policy of racial purity and Arian superiority. As a scapegoat for the humiliation Germany suffered at Versailles, Jews were reviled as subhuman, commonly held to be treacherous creatures, undeserving of pity--beliefs which made the Final Solution possible.

The views of Hitler on Jews are hardly unique or un-Christian, but rather are a product of the centuries of Christianity which preceded him. Consider the 1543 anti-Jewish Pamphlet by Martin Luther "On the Jews and Their Lies" wherein he referred to Jews as "poisonous bitter worms," "miserable and accursed people," "brood of vipers" [see Matt. 3:7], "truly stupid fools," "nothing but thieves and robbers," "great vermin of human ordinances," and " lazy rogues." In dealing with Jews, Martin Luther recommended:

First to set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of them. This is to be done in honor of our Lord and of Christendom ...

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such idolatry, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.

Fifth, I advise that safe conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews."

Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping.

Seventh ... letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow ...

["The Jews and Their Lies"]

The pamphlet "Jews and Their Lies" was displayed at Nazi Nuremberg rallies, and the scholarly view is that it had a major influence on German attitudes to Jews from the Reformation to the

Holocaust (see: Wallmann, Johannes. "The Reception of Luther's Writings on the Jews from the Reformation to the End of the 19th Century," Lutheran Quarterly, n.s. 1, Spring 1987).

So the arrow flung at atheism for Nazi atrocities might, at least in part, be redirected towards historical Christian anti-Semitism, not to mention the other drivers of Nazism: Nationalism, humiliation at Versailles, racial purity, Utopian ideals, Fascism, and the cult of personality of Hitler himself. Nazi Germany was not an atheist regime or an atheist country, and it was not motivated by atheism.

Communist States

But what of countries that have embraced atheism as a national creed: The Soviet Union under Stalin, Mao's China, Pol Pot's Cambodia? The atrocities of these regimes were not primarily motivated by atheism but by the crushing of dissent in fulfilling the Utopian creed of which atheism was but a tenet. To blame atheism is a Fallacy of Division: when one infers that something true for the whole must also be true of all or some of its parts. Atheism, as a part of Stalin's or Pol Pot's regimes, cannot necessarily be judged as equivalent to the whole regime, and the specific causes for the violence require further investigation.

Reflecting on the primary goals of Communism as described by Marx and Engels in redistribution of wealth and changes to the social, political and economic order, atheism was but a secondary consideration. The Soviet State under Stalin was epitomized by the paranoia and power-crazed nature of its leader resulting in purges of all potential opposition. The perceived necessity for the government to control its subjects by force seems to have provided the leaders with the tools to prolong their own grasp on power; men who would be tyrants tended to obtain and keep power. One might make the case that Communism is a failed political system which appears to result in totalitarianism, murderous despots, and failed economic reforms. 20th Century Communism, like Nazism, is based on a Utopian vision for society where human rights are sacrificed for the common good, where the end justifies the means, and where totalitarianism usurps the will of the individual.

Abandonment of faith in God in favor of worship at the altar of science or reason is also often invoked as part of the "atheistic regimes" fallacy. Since atheism does not necessarily entail "blind faith" in science--or anything else--this point is a straw man, but even so the argument is ahistorical. In China the Great leap forward was a disastrous economic experiment that caused millions of deaths through famine, which resulted primarily from inept planning. The agrarian reforms of the Soviet Union also featured bad science and a reliance on Communist dogma with the same results--millions of deaths. Nazi Germany featured pseudoscience-driven policies such as eugenics and racism aimed at purification. Pol Pot relocated urban dwellers to the country to tend farms and work in forced-labor projects resulting in widespread malnutrition and death. Science was subordinate to socialist and communist dogma, with dire consequences. Scientists did just fine in totalitarian states unless they challenged authority--in which case they were killed, forced into exile or put in prison camps.

Pol Pot was not an atheist. A Thervada Buddhist, he believed in irrationalities such as karma, and that heaven was guiding him in his efforts to transform his country into a Communist utopia.

Cambodia was Buddhist, and the Khmer Rouge adopted and mirrored elements of Buddhist thought such a dhamma, and the renunciation of material goods and sentimentality.

The religious or nonreligious beliefs of these despots and their regimes are not necessarily influential in the success or failure of their governments. Hitler was a Christian influenced by Martin Luther, Stalin was an altar boy educated in a seminary, and Pol Pot was educated at a Catholic School for 10 years and then at a Buddhist one. If correlation is all that matters we could easily draw the conclusion that religion is crucial to causing the atrocities of these regimes. Alas, the causes are to be found beyond considerations of belief or nonbelief.

Correlation does not prove causation

A correlation between atheism and the despotic communist regimes of the 20th century does not imply causation. Proponents, nevertheless, seem to make the connection between atheism and those despotic regimes due to their own preexisting biases, reasoning that without Christianity (or another faith) as a controlling force these regimes cut the cord to morality. There is no evidence, however, to support the view that the irreligious are less moral than the religious. The rich history of religious violence, continued in the present day by ISIS, Boko Haram, Christian militias in central Africa, and many other religious groups demonstrates how myopic this view is. Atheists are drastically underrepresented in U.S. prisons at 0.07%, compared to 1.6% of the general population.

Progress

One observes that attitudes to violence have changed dramatically in the last century. In previous centuries capital punishment was common. Divinely ordained monarchs were not squeamish when it came to dealing with their enemies. The revered Queen Elizabeth I had seventy-one of her subjects hanged, drawn and quartered, many on the basis of their religious affiliation. The guilty were dragged by horse on a wooden frame to a public place where they were hanged by the neck until almost dead, then placed on a table, disemboweled, their sex organs were removed and burned, after which they were finally decapitated. The corpse was then hacked into four pieces, which were placed on display in different parts of the city or country. The crime of treason, frequently identified by religious affiliation, was often punished in this gruesome manner; the Christian doctrines of peace and mercy were apparently no obstacle. The torture chambers in the Inquisitions, featuring some of the most sadistic and morally repellent punishments devised by man: the Rack, the Heretics Fork, the Pear, the Strappado, the Judas Cradle, the Breast ripper, the Garrotte, Breaking on the Wheel, and of course, burning at the stake. These were not undertaken in the grip of passion, or with a temporary loss of sanity, they were premeditated acts, reasoned and thought out, based on the practical application of Scripture. The parallel with totalitarianism is self-evident: the ideology demands compulsory adherence on pain of torture and death. If the absence of faith in God severs the moral urge in humans it is curious that we seem to have become progressively more adverse to extreme violence over time, concurrent with an increase in secularism, humanitarian attitudes, and democratic governments.

20th Century violence not the worst

Steven Pinker, in his magnificent The Better Angels of our Nature, provides ample data that violence is declining historically. We are becoming more peaceable when we measure violence in proportion to the world population (which is surely a more accurate measure than by total numbers of deaths given the dramatic increase in the global population). When understood in proportion to the total global population, the 20th century does not represent a high point of violence in history, and in fact its second half has been notable for a lasting peace. The Crusades, unambiguously religiously motivated, resulted in 1 million deaths out of a total world population of 400 million, proportionally higher than the Holocaust. The carnage resulting from the religious Thirty Years War was double that of World War I, and about the same as World War II, when compared as a percentage of world population. This data takes some steam out of the belief that the last century featured extraordinary violence requiring a special explanation.

Perspective: Utopian political systems and Totalitarianism

The large death tolls of the 20th Century are better understood in comparing the rise of Utopian political systems rather than their religious affiliations. As countries have shifted away from political systems such as Nazism and Communism, abandoned totalitarianism as they have embraced universal human rights and became secular liberal democracies, we have had a period of comparative peace. There are also a myriad of other specific reasons explaining the violence of the 20th Century. It is simplistic to characterize societies as if they are driven by a single idea, even those led by genocidal despots feature a range of ideas and interests represented in an ideology. Fascism coexisted with Catholicism in various countries, and Cold War allegiances were driven by the political system rather than the religious affiliation. Weapons became more destructive, capable of killing en masse early in the 20th century allowing for higher death tolls than before. Ethnic cleansing, military juntas, political instability, sectarian violence and other reasons have all contributed.

Atheism does not demand State Atheism

"State Atheism," the official promotion of atheism as an enforced belief by government (employed by Communist regimes), must be distinguished from mere "atheism." A mere belief in atheism does not insist on the conversion of all others. Compulsion by force is an aspect of totalitarianism, not atheism, and without this compulsion demanded on behalf of all the doctrines of Communism there would have been no reason for the persecution of dissenters. There are no new atheists I am aware of who argue for atheism to be state sponsored and enforced on pain of loss of liberty, torture and death. This highlights a crucial distinction between religious and nonreligious ideologies. Christianity suggests an evangelical requirement on believers, and if it were actually true that an eternity in Hell awaits nonbelievers then one would indeed be doing good by forcing others to conform to its doctrines. Fervent believers in Islam are also determined to see to it that their religion is practiced by all. Harsh punishments--including the death penalty--still exist in many parts of the world for apostasy and atheism.

State Atheism represents a totalitarian ideology abhorrent to most modern atheists, humanists and secularists, and is an indictment on the collaboration between Utopian ideologies and totalitarian political systems, not atheism itself. Atheism necessitates only either a lack of belief or disbelief

in god(s); it is not necessary to adhere to an ideology seeking to enforce compulsory belief on all. Atheism is conflated with State atheism, symptomatic of the apologetic habit of measuring aspects of atheism in contradistinction to aspects of religion, as if they are diametrically opposed to one another with equivalent but opposite qualities. Atheism is broadened into a tapestry of irreligious ideologies often including such things as scientism, social Darwinism, eugenics, Communism and totalitarianism. The new atheists are not arguing for State atheism any more than they are promoting theocratic rule. Pluralism is an ideal common to atheists, one that stands in stark contrast to totalitarianism.

Historical Perspective

Historians refer to these brutal regimes as Communist States, not Atheistic states (I refer to Steven Rosefielde, Klas-Goren Karlsson, Stephen Hicks, Robert Conquest, Anne Applebaum, Eric D. Wietz, Benjamin Valentino, Jacques Semelin, Jon M. Thomson, and Helen Rappaport). These scholars argue variously that a range of reasons, namely Communist Ideology, Crisis Conditions, Personal Responsibility of the leaders, and Totalitarianism, led to mass violence. Notably, political movements requiring revolution cannot gain power without violent uprisings, and a militaristic view of maintaining power seems to endure.

Key Points

The Fallacy of the "atheistic regimes" argument encounters the following decisive objections:

Nazism was not atheistic

It is a Fallacy of Division to equate atheism with larger political systems which might include it as a tenet

Atheism was not the prime motivator of the violence undertaken the fascist and communist totalitarian regimes of the 20th century

No evidence suggests decline in religious belief, or atheism, leads to an increase in violence, although plenty of evidence suggests the opposite

The 20th century was not the most violent in history

The cause of violence and the passage to nonviolence is better understood in terms of the rise and fall of Utopian totalitarian states

Atheists do not support or promote State Atheism

Historians do not support the "atheistic state" fallacy

Facing these objections the straw man falls. Atheism does not suffer any guilt by association with tyrannical despots; their delusions of grandeur, false ideologies and lust for power were far more urgent motivators than the influence of a lack of belief in God. It might be comforting for the apologists of religion to rationalize the violence done in its name by invoking the fallacy of atheist regimes, but they are forced to ignore history to do so. The failure to make elementary distinctions,

an incurious and cherry-picked view of history, is symptomatic of starting with a conclusion and then trying to furnish it with evidence.

A Critique of Thomas Aquinas by Paul Edwards

Aquinas is most important for our story because of the five "proofs" he offers for the existence of God in both of his main works. The following is a brief (and admittedly not quite adequate) summary that will suffice for our purposes. The first three proofs employ an idea found in Aristotle's Metaphysics.

But if there is nothing eternal, then there can be no becoming: for there must be something which undergoes the process of becoming, that is, that from which things come to be; and the last member of this series must be ungenerated, for the series must start with something, since nothing can come from nothing.

The first of Aquinas's proofs states that any moving object is moved by something else, and since an endless regress is impossible, we must arrive at a "First Mover" which moves other things but is itself not moved. The second proof, by rejecting an infinite series of causes, leads to a First or Uncaused Cause. The third, known as the argument from contingency, maintains tains that all contingent beings must have an ultimate source which is not contingent. Perhaps the most important objection to all three of these arguments is Aquinas's mistaken assumption that an infinite series of objects is impossible. Since Cantor and Russell, it is generally agreed that there is nothing impossible in an infinite series, whether of numbers or of objects or of events. The first of Aquinas's "proofs" also conflicts with Newton's First Law of Motion, which teaches that an object is at rest or in uniform motion unless acted on by an external force. This means that a universe of moving objects without an external cause is entirely conceivable.' The Fourth Way maintains that the various perfections in the world must have their source in something completely perfect. In his admirable Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy Simon Blackburn offers the following counterexamples:

One number may be greater than another, but there is no greatest number; similarly one automobile may be better than another without there being a perfect automobile.

The Fifth Way is a form of the design argument and since it does not employ any technical language I will give it in Aquinas's own words:

We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the best result. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move towards an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exists by whom all natural things are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

I always assumed that the "natural bodies" mentioned by Aquinas are plants and animals, but after reading some commentators including Father Frederick Copleston, I am not sure that this is the right interpretation. The following lowing is Copleston's comment:

It is of the unconscious cooperation of different kinds of material things in the production and maintenance of a relatively stable cosmic system that he is thinking, not of the benefits accruing to us from our use of certain objects. And his argument is that this cooperation on the part of heterogeneous neous material things clearly points to the existence of an extrinsic intelligent gent author of this co-operation, who operates with an end in view. If Aquinas had lived in the days of the evolutionary hypothesis, he would doubtless have argued that this hypothesis supports rather than invalidates the conclusion of the argument.

If and insofar as Aquinas refers to the parts of living things that cooperate to keep the organism in existence and to perpetuate the species, two criticisms are in order. First, we do not need a supernatural explanation once we have an explanation in terms of natural causes: Darwin's hypothesis undercuts a theological explanation as has frequently been observed by believers as well as by unbelievers. It also has to be pointed out that Aquinas is not just arguing for an intelligent cause, but for one that is all-powerful and perfectly good; and here obviously a Darwinian theory is vastly more plausible: Siamese twins, babies born blind and crippled and all kinds of biological horrors such as "parasitic ingestion" do not sit well with a traditional Christian tian view but are perfectly compatible with a naturalistic explanation or with belief in a finite god.'

Physicalism, or Something Near Enough by Jaegwon Kim (Physicalism at a Crossroads)

In getting to where we are at this point, the first choice point we faced was where we had to decide between substance dualism, which posits both material bodies and immaterial minds, and ontological physicalism, which admits only material objects. Motivations for introducing entities other than material things vary— from supposed philosophical requirements in connection with certain issues, for example, the persistence of persons over time, a possible survival of bodily death, and the special directness of knowledge of one’s own mind, to religious imperatives and mystical intimations. As we saw, however, immaterial minds outside physical space, are causally cut off not only from physical objects and events but also from other minds as well. Each immaterial mind would be a totally isolated entity; its existence is inexplicable and its presence or absence can make no difference to anything else. I believe this is sufficient ground for rejecting substance dualism of all kinds, or any ontology that acquiesces in immaterial, nonphysical things. The alternative is physicalism with an ontology countenancing only material things. There is just one kind of substance, and it is material substance. The physical world of spacetime is the whole world. Let us suppose then that at the first choice point we have opted for ontological physicalism. The next choice point we face concerns the properties of material things: Given that only material things exist, what kinds of properties do they, or can they, have? Specifically, can they have properties that are not physical? That is, can they have properties that are not dealt with in fundamental physics or reducible, in some broad but clear sense, to fundamental physical properties? As we saw, many thinkers have been attracted to an affirmative answer to this question, holding the view that complex physical systems can exhibit novel, “emergent” properties that are not reducible to the properties of their simpler constituents. Early emergentists thought that even such simple physicochemical properties as the transparency of water were emergent; now it is generally conceded that consciousness and mentality are the best, and perhaps the only, candidates

for genuine emergence. Emergentism, which is now showing signs of a revival after having been moribund for much of the second half of the twentieth century, is a form of property dualism, the position that, in addition to physical properties, there are physically irreducible domains of emergent properties, of which mental properties are among the leading candidates. Other forms of antireductionism include Davidson's "anomalous monism" and the early functionalism of Hilary Putnam and Jerry Fodor. Property dualism based on ontological physicalism is called nonreductive materialism (or physicalism). Emergentism, anomalous monism, and Putnam-Fodor functionalism are the best-known examples of nonreductive materialism. What we have just seen is that this intermediate halfway house between the two poles of substance dualism and reductionist physicalism is a promissory note that cannot be redeemed. As we saw, the supervenience/exclusion argument shows that property dualism is not able to explain how mental causation is possible; instead of saving mental causation, it ends up relegating mental phenomena to the status of epiphenomena. Nonreductive materialism has been motivated by a desire to save mentality as something distinctive and special, and something that we value. Instead of saving it, it loses it by depriving it of causal powers. The important lesson we have learned from three decades of debate—Davidson's "Mental Events" was published in 1970—is this: the demands of causality do not tolerate duality of properties any more than duality of substances, and both Cartesian substance dualism and contemporary property dualism run aground on the rocks of mental causation. So property dualism is out—at least, for now. Where do we go from here? If causality excludes dual realms of mental and physical properties, that means that there is only one secure causal domain, the domain of physical properties. What then happens to mental properties? One possibility is that mental properties are reducible to physical properties: if mental properties are reduced to physical properties, this would conserve and legitimatize them as members of the physical domain, thereby safeguarding their causal status. But suppose that the mental fails to reduce: we would then be faced with the specter of epiphenomenalism, and we must find a way to live with causally impotent mental properties. This may very well push us over the edge into mental irrealism; for one might argue that epiphenomenalism is a fate no better than irrealism and in fact indistinguishable from it—Samuel Alexander urged that to deprive something of causal powers is to deprive it of existence. This leads to eliminativism: mental properties are banished from our ontology as causally idle "danglers" with no purpose to serve. This is not an outcome that anyone can welcome; most philosophers—for example, Jerry Fodor as we will see below—take mental causation as wholly nonnegotiable; it must be protected at all costs. The best, or the most satisfying, outcome would have been a vindication of mental causation along the lines of nonreductive physicalism; that would have allowed us to retain mentality as something that is causally efficacious and yet autonomous vis-à-vis the physical domain. But the best outcome, as we saw, is not to be had. The next best outcome, in fact our only hope at this point if mental causation is to be saved, is physical reductionism. Physical reduction would save causal efficacy for mentality, at the cost of its autonomy. Reductionism allows only one domain, the physical domain, but the mental may find a home in that domain. Some will say that the reductionist option is hardly distinguishable from eliminativism, that to reduce minds and consciousness to patterns of electrical activity in a network of soulless neurons is in effect to renounce them as a distinctive and valued aspect of our being. This reaction is understandable but inappropriate. There is an honest difference between elimination and conservative reduction. Phlogiston was eliminated, not reduced; temperature and

heat were reduced, not eliminated. Witches were eliminated, not reduced; the gene has been reduced, not eliminated. We have a tendency to read "nonphysical" when we see the word "mental," and think "nonmental" when we see the word "physical." This has the effect of making the idea of physical reduction of the mental a simple verbal contradiction, abetting the idea that physical reduction of something we cherish as a mental item, like thought or feeling, would turn it into something other than what it is. But this would be the case only if by "physical" we meant "nonmental." We should not prejudge the issue of mind-body reduction by building irreducibility into the meanings of our words. When we consider the question whether the mental can be physically reduced, it is not necessary—even if this could be done—to begin with general definitions of mental and physical; rather, the substantive question that we are asking, or should be asking, is whether or not things like belief, desire, emotion, and consciousness are reducible to neural, biological, and physicochemical properties and processes. We can understand this question and intelligently debate it, without subsuming these items under some general conception of what it is for something to be mental. If "mental" is understood to imply "nonphysical," it will then be an open question whether or not belief, desire, sensation, perception, and the rest are mental in that sense. And this question will replace the original question of their physical reducibility. There is here a substantive question which no verbal conventions or decisions should be allowed to trivialize. In any case, our best remaining option is reductionism. Does this mean that we are committed willy-nilly to reductionism? The answer is no: what we have established, if our considerations have been generally correct, is a conditional thesis, "If mentality is to have a causal influence in the physical domain—in fact, if it is to have any causal efficacy at all—it must be physically reducible." I have not argued for reductionism simpliciter; rather, I have argued that mental causation requires reduction, and that anyone who believes in mental causation must be prepared to endorse mind-body reduction. We may call this "conditional reductionism." It is important to keep in mind that this is not reductionism tout court. Moreover, none of this says anything about the truth or plausibility of reductionism. Whether or not the mental can be reduced to a physical base is an independent question that must be settled on its own merits. Those of us who believe in mental causation should hope for a successful reduction. But again this is only a wish; it doesn't make reducibility real or reductionism true.

God Would Not Perform Miracles By Matt McCormick

I. Introduction

As debates over whether any miracles such as the resurrection have raged on, little thought has been given to two questions: first, if a miracle occurs, could we derive support for the claim that God exists from it? And second, if God were going to act, would he act by means of miracles? That is, is a miracle the sort of thing he would do? I will argue that the answers to these two questions are no, thus upending any further argument about whether or not some miracles have occurred. Even if a full-blown violation of the laws of nature occurs, we have compelling reasons to reject the hypothesis that the all-powerful, omniscient creator of the universe was responsible for it. A being of infinite power and knowledge wouldn't act by means of miracles.

II. Miracles as Evidence for God

Traditionally, miracles have been understood as violations of the laws of nature. And attention has mostly been focused on whether we could have sufficient evidence to believe that such an event has occurred. Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that such an interruption of the natural order occurred. What could we could we then infer? Many have either implicitly or explicitly assumed that if a miracle occurs, then proof or at least substantial support for the existence of God is in hand. Many of us, both skeptics and believers, appear to take it for granted that if there really were a Jesus, for example, who did and said all the things he is purported to, then we'd have compelling reasons to think that the God of Christianity is real. If Jesus was resurrected from the dead, then it would seem that Christianity would be vindicated from skeptical arguments against God. Many atheists and non-believers have been just as guilty of buying into these assumptions when arguing that there really was no Jesus, or that the virgin birth motif was common among various first century religious sects, or that the Bible contains internal inconsistencies, or that there was no intelligent designer of life on Earth. The presumption seems to be that if there really was a Jesus, or if his mother was a virgin, or if the Bible is consistent, or if there were a non-natural cause of life on Earth, then we would be forced to accept that we have compelling evidence that theism is true, or that Christianity has been proven. Evan Fales, for example, an avowed skeptic, has said that were an undeniable miracle to occur such as the stars in the sky suddenly realigning to spell "Mene Mene Tekel Upharsin" thus making headlines all over the world and sending astronomers into a frenzy, then "that would convince me of theism (or polytheism); no other explanation is remotely plausible."[66] It appears that the reason that so many skeptics go to battle with such tenacity over whether Jesus was real, or whether we have sufficient reason to believe in miracles, is that if those claims are corroborated, then the debate is lost. The problem, I will argue, is that miracles, even the most robust ones, do not show the existence of an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good being (the omni-God), and the gap of proof for the more specific and articulated Christian God is even wider. Even more importantly, I will argue that God would not perform miracles, so if one occurred, we could be sure that God did not do it. Therefore, miracles don't lend any support to the God hypothesis. The debate about miracles since Hume has largely focused on whether or not such events ever occur or whether or not it is ever reasonable to believe that they have.[67] In the end, I am more epistemologically open to the prospect of having sufficient miracle evidence than Hume; I think we should remain open to the possibility that a person equipped with good tools, adequate concepts, and sufficient means of investigation could be in an epistemic position, albeit rarely, where believing a miracle occurred is reasonable. That puts me in a different camp than the hordes of skeptics following Hume who appear to believe that only the most extraordinary amount of evidence could be sufficient to prove a miracle. It would be a mistake, I believe, to rule such a claim out a priori or virtually so with Hume's global standards. Surely the all-powerful creator of all of reality would have sufficient power at its disposal to generate evidence that would be compelling; and I'd rather be prepared to revise all of my beliefs and the convictions I attach to them proportionally to the evidence. I won't explore an account of what would be sufficient evidence here, however. I have argued extensively, though, that the evidence we have concerning miracles like the resurrection fall painfully short of this standard. For my purposes, let us assume that it is possible for miracles, conceived as violations of the law of nature, to occur. And let us also suppose that we had sufficient evidence in hand to justify believing that it occurred leaving aside what that evidence might look like. Now

what can or should we infer? I will focus my argument around several questions: To what extent can the occurrence of a miracle be construed as evidence for the existence of the sort of God that is traditionally envisioned? Let us separate some properties: would it be reasonable to take a miracle as an indicator that a single, supernatural, and personal being of infinite power, knowledge, and goodness is responsible? Even in the best-case scenario, the argument to the God conclusion is vastly underdetermined. But it gets even worse; if a miracle occurred, I will argue that we could be sure that an omni-being did not do it.

III. What Would a Miracle Show?

What seems to have infused much of our thinking about miracles is some slipping between necessary and sufficient conditions. One might assume that if, in order to perform a miracle, a being must be omnipotent, omniscient, and infinitely good, and if we had compelling grounds to believe that a miracle had occurred, then we would have compelling evidence that God exists. The problem, however, is that while these divine properties appear to be sufficient to perform miracles, they are not necessary. Since Christianity is the predominant religion in the west, and since the resurrection of Jesus is the miracle upon which is it founded, I am going to focus my attention there. However, to the extent that other religious traditions are founded on miracles, my arguments can all be expanded to apply to them. So first I'll say a few words about God and Jesus. According to the Christian faith, the relationship between Jesus and God is complicated. The Christian God is, by all accounts, an omni-god. He is the all-powerful, all-knowing, singular, personal and infinitely good creator of the universe. Jesus is alleged to have been his son, who was divine, but he was also a man, by Christian doctrine. The extent to which he was a man and lacked the status of a fully omni-being is a point of some controversy, even between believers. God, we will assume, could have resurrected or not resurrected Jesus if he chose, and the miracles of Jesus were, either directly or indirectly God's doing by most believers' lights. We can, I believe, speak of God's performing the miracles that are attributed to Jesus without disruption of this argument. There were other alleged miraculous events, more often in the Old Testament, such as the burning bush or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, that have been directly attributed to God. It is God's acts, such as these, that we are interested in here. Now we can turn to the central questions. Is omnipotence required to violate the laws of nature? Consider these two events, both violations of the laws of nature: First, someone walks on water. Second, all of the nuclear fusion reactions that drive the burning of every star in the universe are stopped and all of those stars are instantly rendered cold and inert. It is reasonable to think that walking on water takes less power than it would take to stop all of the fusion reactions for all stars. In part, it seems that the former would take less power if we were to try to accomplish it by acting within the framework of natural law. Using physical means to try to bring the former event about in some natural fashion would, I think, be less difficult than the latter. Admittedly, it could be a poor analogy to draw conclusions about how much supernatural power is required for different acts from how much natural power would be required. But other reasoning is convincing: a being could have the power to perform one violation of the laws of nature and not another. Imagine two supernatural entities, one who could do all and only those miraculous feats that Jesus is said to have performed, and another who could do all of the Jesus miracles and infinitely many others as well. Surely the latter would be more powerful on any reasonable account of power, than the former. Or we could imagine that

some force is able to make a human walk on water or stop the sun's burning only once and only for a moment, but never again. The laws of nature would be violated in these cases with less power than omnipotence because, presumably, omnipotence would include the power to perform such acts as well as many others at any time. An agent that could enable someone to walk on water, but that could not reverse time, could not stop the nuclear reaction of the sun, or could not perform any other miracles would not be omnipotent. This reasoning shows that, at the least, omnipotence appears to be merely consistent with miracles but it is not required. Were we to come across compelling evidence that a miracle occurred it might suggest to us that there could be an omnipotent force that was responsible, but not that it must be an omnipotent force. In Hume's famous comment in the Enquiry, he supposes that, …all authors, in all languages, agree that, from the first of January, 1600, there was total darkness over the whole earth for eight days: suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people: that all travelers, who return from foreign countries, bring us accounts of the same tradition, without the least variation or contradiction: it is evident, that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact, ought to receive it as certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it might be derived.[70] Perhaps an omnipotent supernatural being did it, but perhaps it was a force that was only capable of doing that and nothing else. Suppose I told you that I can deadlift 1,000 pounds, and to demonstrate, I deadlift 100 pounds. You respond with skepticism, so I say, "Well, if I could deadlift 1,000 pounds, I'd be able to lift 100 pounds, so what you saw is consistent with my being able to lift 1,000 pounds. Therefore, this is evidence that I can deadlift 1,000 pounds." What about infinite knowledge? Is omniscience necessary in order to violate the laws of nature? No. You could have an unintelligent, but very powerful being who actually violates the laws of nature to burn the image of a face on a fish stick because he thought that would make people believe in him.[71] There have been a few times when something on my car wasn't working, and foolishly, I tinkered around with the components that I reasoned were responsible without really knowing what they do or very much about how they work. And then, after messing around with the settings on the carburetor, or taking some fuses out of the fuse box and putting them back in, or checking the oil, inexplicably and much to my surprise, the car started working properly again. So there are times when I have managed to fix my car, but I was largely in the dark about how I did it, what I did, or what was wrong in the first place. There's no reason in principle to deny that this same sort of thing could be going on with a being who intervenes in nature to bring about miracles. Perhaps he sort of faked it, tinkered blindly a bit, and the results seem to have come out the way he wanted or perhaps not. In fact, this sort of God hypothesis might make much more sense of the examples of miracles that we often hear about: statues bleeding from the eyes, statues drinking milk, and fish sticks bearing the image of Jesus. Omniscience appears to be consistent with miracles, but it is not necessary, and cannot be inferred. Suppose I told you my I.Q. was 200, and I took a high school algebra test to prove it and I scored a perfect 100: "Well, my having an I.Q. of 200 is consistent with my perfect math score. If I was that smart, I could score perfectly. Therefore, the evidence indicates that my I.Q. is 200." Is omni-benevolence necessary to bring about a miracle? Again, the answer is no. Typically, we think that miracles are fortuitous events. But Satan's torturing Job at God's behest was clearly a violation of the ordinary course of nature. Presumably, if Satan hadn't engaged in his challenge with God, then Job would not have miraculously lost all of his livestock, had his wife and children die, developed boils all over his body, and so on. Left

to the normal course of natural laws, Job's life would have been much less unpleasant. Perhaps the misfortunes that befell Job were God's actions and an indispensable part of an infinitely good plan in the grand scheme of things. We also presume, for example, that Satan's appearance to Jesus in the desert was miraculous. So we can agree that there's nothing intrinsically good, and nothing intrinsically infinitely good about a violation of the laws of nature. Therefore, miraculous events need not arise from good sources. And therefore, miracles don't entail the existence of a good source or sources. Miracles that appear to accomplish good ends might seem to be consistent with infinite goodness but omni-benevolence is not necessary. Many of the miracles that we have been told about seem to reflect good will— Jesus heals the sick, raises the dead, cures blindness, or feeds the hungry. But are any of these acts indicative of infinite goodness? Infinite justice? Moral perfection? Again, not by themselves. Would any single, finitely measurable miracle indicate infinite goodness in the author? No. I have some degree of goodwill, and sometimes I act on that basis and do kind or loving things for others. But for much of the rest of the time, apathy, distraction, selfishness, or indifference set in and my actions don't reflect much goodness at all. So singular, or even multiple miracles that seem to have good results may be consistent with infinite goodness, but they are not sufficient to entail it. Like the omnipotence examples above, a good miracle could be the result of a momentary lapse into goodness by a being who is otherwise indifferent or even malevolent. The full list of Jesus' miracles: turning water to wine, raising Lazarus from the dead, feeding some starving people, withering a fruitless tree, and so on, is indicative of just as much goodness as might be required to do those acts, but no more. Suppose I tell you that I am the kindest, most charitable, most loving, most compassionate human being in history. Then to illustrate, I give a homeless man $ 5. You are skeptical, but I insist, "that act is consistent with my being the morally best person in history, therefore, it indicates that I am." Miracles are consistent with a range of goodness, or even no goodness at all, so a miracle can't be sufficient evidence for an infinitely good cause.

IV. Would God Perform Miracles?

Now, having seen that we cannot infer infinite divine properties from real miracles, what of the stronger thesis that God would not perform them? Let us consider omni-benevolence first. There are compelling reasons to think that an infinitely good being would not do miracles, even ones that do vast but finite good; if one were to occur, we should infer that the responsible party is not omnibenevolent. Many miracles are presented as good: Jesus is alleged to have healed a crippled man so that he could walk again, he also cured a group of lepers, and miraculously fed thousands of hungry people. Many people are alleged to have been miraculously healed by drinking or bathing in the spring waters at Lourdes, France. Mohammed is said to have multiplied food and drink supernaturally on several occasions in order to feed hungry masses. God is reported to have parted the Red Sea to save the Israelites, all toward purportedly good ends. The problem is that at any given moment on the planet, now and when these miracles are alleged to have happened, there are millions or even billions of other people who are not being cured, healed, or benefitted by a miracle. A miracle that we attribute to an infinitely good God is problematic because of what it omits; it is alleged that it indicates that God is there, and under some circumstances, he will intervene in the course of nature to achieve some good end. But there are all of these other cases, many of which appear to be perfectly parallel, or even more desperately in need of divine

intervention, yet none occurs. While Jesus turns water into wine at one party, thousands or millions of other parties go dry. Even worse, millions of people suffer horribly from disease, famine, cruelty, torture, genocide, and death. The occurrence of a finite miracle, in the midst of so many instances of unabated suffering, suggests that the being who is responsible doesn't know about, doesn't care about, or doesn't have the power to address the others. If a doctor travels to a village with enough polio vaccine to inoculate 1,000 children, but only gives it to ten of them, and withholds it from the rest, and then watches the rest get sick, be crippled, or die, we would conclude that doctor was a monster, not a saint. That doctor had the power, the knowledge, the wherewithal to alleviate more suffering, but did not. That doctor must be lacking in some regard. Christine Overall makes a step towards the same conclusion, "If Jesus was the Son of God, I want to know why he was hanging out at a party, making it go better [turning water into wine], when he could have been healing lepers, for example." We can press the point further. Suppose a miraculous event suddenly heals all the suffering in the world today. An omnibenevolent being would have done it sooner. Why not yesterday? And why not in Auschwitz or Dachau in 1945, and why not when the bubonic plague was ravaging and killing millions in Europe during the 1300s? We are left with this question: There are vast amounts of comparable suffering in the history of sentience that were not or are not being alleviated by miracles. How could we possibly infer infinite goodness, love, or kindness in some supernatural source that has shown the ability and the willingness to fix a select few and knowingly ignore the rest? Overall has the correct answer, "a being that engages in events that are trivial, capricious, and biased cannot be a morally perfect God."

V. Knowledge and goodness must be actualized.

A useful distinction here is to see that knowledge and goodness must be fully actualized, whereas power can be merely potential. With goodness, to act below capacity is to fail to be good. Being good entails actually doing those things within one's capacity, and to the fullest extent of one's capacity that goodness recommends. To leave off doing some good that is within one's capacity actually diminishes one's goodness in a way exerting less power than one's full capacity does not. Goodness that is restrained where there is no internal or external limitation that is limiting it is not goodness at all. Consider the contrary position. Suppose that being good to a particular extent only requires that one has the potential to be that good. Suppose a being warrants the label "good," not for the actual good acts that it engages it, but for the good acts it could potentially do but does not. How many more good acts are there that I could do that are not outside the range of my power and knowledge? How much more good could I have done with my actions with no significant external obstacles than the ones I've done? There are vastly more good acts that I could have easily done than what I have actually done. Do I deserve the label "good," or praise as being virtuous on the basis of those potential goods, or on the basis of the actual goods I've done? Potentially, I'm a moral Martin Luther King, or Ghandi, or Buddha. But surely I do not deserve to be labeled as good as Martin Luther King on the grounds that potentially I could have performed good acts on the scale that he did. I deserve to be morally praised for the good I've actually done. So, being good must mean acting at full capacity, not below. And being infinitely good must mean acting at full infinite capacity. Miracles then, even good but finite ones, are not the means by which an infinitely good being would act. Of course, there are good actions that I failed or will

fail to accomplish in my life because I lack power or knowledge to achieve them, and I may not deserve moral blame for those. Or we would not diminish the goodness we attribute to me as a result of my failure to achieve those. I lack the power and the knowledge to cure cancer, as did Martin Luther King, but we are not therefore less good as a result. We are absolved from credit or blame for those actions that are beyond our capacity. But God will not lack the power or the knowledge to accomplish any action that is good. So, God's failure to do those acts cannot be similarly absolved. Similarly, knowledge must be actualized, not merely potential. Traditionally, omniscience entails God's knowing all and only truths. There are no truths that escape him. His merely having the potential to know all of the truths is insufficient to warrant the label omniscience. My potential to acquire the knowledge for performing brain surgery, or being a nuclear physicist doesn't not warrant claiming that I have that knowledge. So the limited scope of miracles cannot be attributed to God's not knowing more. Miracles, as confined, local events solving local problems, such as getting Lazarus back on his feet, aren't the sort of expansive, world spanning events befitting an omniscient being. An omniscient God doesn't forget to get enough wine for the party in the first place. Local problems needing local solutions won't pop up for a being that knows everything and has the power to do anything. Miracles, as finite, local adjustments to achieve narrowly framed goals are incoherent as actions of a being whose knowledge and power encompass all of reality. The question we began with is whether or not we can infer God's infinite goodness from a good miracle. But now we have considerations suggesting that an infinitely good being will not act below its good capacity. Infinite goodness, knowledge, and power in a being would preclude it doing only part of the good job. If some being saw fit to fix one evil in the world, then there are evils worth fixing from its perspective. In the inductive problem of evil discussion, William Rowe has called these, "instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse."[77] In a good miracle, then, it would appear that the being responsible has found a case to be one where it could prevent suffering without losing a greater good, or allowing an equal or worse evil. The defender of God's infinite goodness is put in the unfortunate and unreasonable position of having to argue that only the miracles of Jesus, for instance, were instances of intense suffering which God could have prevented without losing a greater good or permitting some equally bad or worse evil. The defender will have to argue that there were no other instances in all of the history of sentience except the raising of Lazarus, the withering of the fig tree, the turning of water into wine, and so on where God could have and should have acted miraculously. They are committed to the view that only the exact list of Jesus' miracles constitutes the complete list of all the good, miraculous acts that an infinite God could accomplish; that list and no more is God acting at full capacity. That position strikes me as unreasonable. If those instances warrant a miraculous intervention, then there are more. There are many others that look just like it, and there are many cases that appear to be worse. But those other interventions did not occur. An infinitely good, knowing, and powerful God would have performed those too. So, whatever the source of those miracles may be, it is not infinitely good. An infinitely good God wouldn't leave the job partially done. James Keller develops this point into a moral argument against God's performing miracles on the grounds. "The claim that God has worked a miracle implies that God has singled out certain persons for some benefit which many others do not receive," Keller argues, "implies that God is

unfair." "More specifically," he continues, "there may be two cases which are similar in all ways that seem relevant, yet in one case there will be a recovery (which some deem a miracle) and in the other case no recovery." For one person to receive miraculous assistance while someone else who's situation resembles the first case in every important respect does not is unjust. An infinitely good being would not be responsible for such injustices. So a miraculous event of this sort would not be brought about by a just God. A person confronted with a miracle is in this situation: Here's a case of the laws of nature being violated, possibly in order to rectify a case of what appears to be pointless evil. There are many other cases of what appear to be pointless evils now and in the past that were not rectified. Lots of them resemble this one in all the relevant respects that I can think of. And many of them are far worse and appear to be even more worthy of being repaired. What is reasonable to conclude about the possible goodness of the source behind the miracle I am considering? If it is omnibenevolent, then it would have fixed those too. So, if this event arose from some supernatural source or sources, it is reasonable to conclude that they or it are not omnibenevolent. Ironically, the challenge to God's existence presented by inexplicable suffering is made worse for the theist who alleges that God performs miracles. Every case where someone claims that their prayers led to their rapid recovery from terminal cancer, or that their piety helped bring back a loved one safe from the fighting in a war zone shines a light on all the other cases of suffering that went unabated despite heartfelt prayers, decent lives, and fervent piety. Miracles, if they occur, point to a decidedly less than infinitely good cause. For the Christian, it would strain credulity less to argue that God is all good and loving without the complications that miracles introduce. That is, the theist in these cases would have less explaining to do, and could possibly make more sense of the compatibility of a world that does not have these local, capricious miracles, than a world where one person wins the lottery, or has a cancer tumor vanish, or is the sole survivor of horrible accident, while wars, famine, plagues, and drought kill millions elsewhere. If an omni-God performed no miracles, one might offer up some generalized account of gratuitous suffering like Hick's soul-making theodicy wherein the inflexibility of the laws of nature builds moral and intellectual virtue in us. A good God wouldn't alter the course of nature, according to this popular view, because it gives us the opportunity to help others, show generosity and love, and to acquire knowledge of the world. But the occurrence of miracles suggests a being who is at best arbitrary and capricious.

1) Knowledge and goodness must be actualized properties.

2) God is alleged to be infinitely knowledgeable and good.

3) Miracles are not consistent with infinite knowledge and goodness.

4) Therefore, an infinitely knowing and good God would not perform miracles.

VI. God Wouldn't Do Miracles; God Isn't an Underachiever

Now let me expand the argument that God would not perform miracles. Consider the question now from the other side. Assume that there is an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good, singular, and personal divine being. What sort of acts would it engage in? That being's actions will perfectly and completely achieve that agent's purposes. Its acts will achieve their ends as fully as they can be fulfilled. The resulting state of affairs will be the perfect manifestation of that agent's will.

There won't be any restraint from some external force. There won't be any knowable solution or knowable fact or knowable outcome that such a being wouldn't be aware of. There will be nothing beyond its power. The results of its actions will not dissatisfy that being because it still desires something that cannot be had, or because it cannot obtain its goals. So generally, we should assume that if some anomalous event occurs, and that event is the result of the exercise of an omni-being's will, then the state of affairs produced through that even will be completely and exactly what that being sought to achieve. The results will be as perfect a fulfillment of that being's will as can possibly be achieved. There are cases where finite beings like ourselves seek to accomplish some goal that is beyond our power, or out of ignorance, we employ the wrong means to accomplish our ends. So our results may or may not reflect good intentions, competence, knowledge, and ability. And our results may or may not succeed at getting what we wanted. But an omni-being will not fail to achieve its desired ends for lack of ability, incompetence, moral virtue, or ignorance. Consider two computer programming students working on a homework project to produce some output Y from an input X using a programming language. Smith creates a circuitous, inefficient, clumsy, and unnecessarily complicated program that fulfills the required task with hundreds of lines of code. Smith's program produces the Y output from input X, but it takes lots of time, and the program contains lots of unused and unhelpful features. Jones is smarter than Smith and has a more powerful command of the means at her disposal. She finds a simple, elegant, efficient solution that achieves the same output with a few dozen lines of code with no wasted time, and no unnecessary features. The instructor would rightly give Jones the better grade; she has enacted a better solution to the problem. By extension, an omniscient, omnipotent, morally perfect being would achieve the most elegant, effective, and righteous means to achieve its ends. Omniscience would grasp that solution perfectly, omnipotence would enact it without any restraint, moral perfection would guide its goodness. We'd also expect, if that being is infinitely good, morally perfect, or omnibenevolent, then it would have only had the highest, most noble, most appropriate goals as targets for the exercise of its will, whatever those might be. As a result, we shouldn't expect lesser, insufficient acts from such a being. A priori, we wouldn't expect to see minor gestures, insignificant events, or trivial results. Unhappy, incomplete outcomes only arise from the actions of a being who lacks foresight, ability, judgment, or virtue. Since, as we have seen, the typical miracles that have been alleged in history could have been brought about by a force or forces that are not all-powerful, knowing, and good, God would be acting far below capacity if he had done them. Even if we set aside my argument miracles are precluded for God by his goodness and knowledge, we can see that miracles are a more superficial, ineffective, and indirect means for achieving ends than an omni-God would enact. Consider some of the purposes that have been attributed to miracles. If God has the goal of instilling belief, inspiring faith, fortifying resolve, discouraging misbehavior, or enforcing commandments, it takes very little imagination to conceive of more direct, effective, and sustained means of achieving those ends. As Ted Drange has argued, if these were God's goals, then it would have been a simple matter to directly implant belief into all people's minds, or perform more spectacular miracles that would convince more people. What would be more personal than if Jesus had reappeared to everyone, not just a handful of easily discredited zealots? Millions of angels, disguised as humans, could have spread out and preach the word behind the scenes. Or God could have protected the Bible from defects in writing, copying, and translation. God, if he had been responsible, would have

been vastly more effective at achieving these goals. Walking on water, turning water into wine, and raising the dead are underpowered, inelegant, clumsy solutions to the various goals that are typically attributed to God when we reflect on what an omni-being is capable of. Jesus could have given a more conclusive demonstration of his divinity to more people than raising a single dead man, or destroying a fig tree that had no fruit in front of a handful of already converted witnesses. Jesus' resurrection as it has come to us was an isolated event. No one seems to have seen the stone being moved or the body being reanimated. Only a few people saw the tomb after. And only a tiny group of people had a close encounter with Jesus when he returned. Without exception, the miracles that have been presented in Christianity as well as the rest of the world's religions have been ambiguous, under-documented, obscure, contentious, and divisive. It takes very little imagination to envision events that would have been vastly more appropriate and effective for a divine being. An infinitely powerful being could have just saved the Israelites instead of the prolonged conflicts with the Pharaoh of Egypt involving plagues, murdering children, parting the Red Sea, and so on. An omni-being could have simply achieved whatever ends for humanity he had in the entire Jesus saga. If some being's intention was to foster confusion, strife, and sectarianism, however, that end was accomplished quite effectively. When we consider the alleged miracles of history with a sufficiently broad conception of what divine power, knowledge, and goodness would be, no other goals seem to fit as well. Consider the problem this way. For all of the alleged miracles in history, facsimiles that are undetectable to anyone but an expert can be performed naturally by even mediocre magicians and illusionists. David Copperfield makes the Statue of Liberty disappear on television. Penn and Teller catch bullets in their teeth. A Las Vegas magician appears to walk on water in a swimming pool and float in the air over the Luxor hotel. Imagine the social and religious impact these ingenious illusionists could have had amongst the superstitious, poor, and uneducated masses of New Testament Palestine. Religious leaders such as Billy Graham, Peter Popoff, Robert Tilton, Pat Robertson, and Jerry Falwell use cruder and more transparent trickery and deception to win the hearts of millions of people and acquire vast wealth from more educated, modern people. My point is not to suggest that Jesus was merely performing sleight of hand tricks, although that is certainly a possibility. My point is that surely an omni-God, were he to opt to manifest himself through miracles would do better than feats that look just like sleight of hand tricks that are so easily faked. It is more reasonable to conclude that an infinitely powerful, knowledgeable, and good being would not perform miracles than to attribute acts to him than an ordinary illusionist could effectively fake. The full list of alleged miracles and paranormal phenomena in history is full of fabrications, frauds, and confusions. Were God, the infinite creator of the universe to perform one that is real but that resembles the natural fakes, then it stands the same chance of exoneration as the one innocent man who is mistakenly jailed. He cries out for justice in a prison full of guilty criminals who all passionately insist that they are innocent too. Couldn't an omni- being do better than that? Would he allow himself to be so grossly mistaken, maligned, and misunderstood? Why would he bury the message? When we consider the larger picture, miracles become unworthy of God. Whatever God was purportedly trying to accomplish, aren't there more effective ways to do it? Couldn't this act have been bigger? Smarter? More effective at that goal? And if so, then the fact that it isn't bigger, smarter, or better gives me convincing evidence that was not God who was responsible. If a reasonable person is confronted with a miracle, they should ask: if God were attempting to

demonstrate his existence to me there would be no obstacles. But this miracle is insufficient to that task. So a miracle is not the sort that would be performed by God. He would do much better than this if he was trying to demonstrate his existence, or whatever the purported goal.[81] Similarly, if God were attempting to accomplish good in the world, then there would be no obstacle to his achieving much more of it than this miracle does. Suppose that thousands of the sick get healed, or the hungry get fed, or the Red Sea parts to save the Israelites. None of these miracles accomplishes nearly as much as God could. So it is a mistake to conclude that a miracle is a manifestation of his infinite power, or love. In many examples, God punishes with miracles. Lot's wife gets turned to pillar of salt for watching the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah when God commanded her not to. The view that Hurricane Katrina was sent by God to punish sinners in New Orleans has been popular among American evangelical preachers. If God were attempting to exact some punishment or retribution through a miracle, then it would be grossly inconsistent to arbitrarily single out some individual for lesser misdeeds while ignoring so many others, particularly when the misdeeds of others are so grievous. An omni-being would achieve vast, effective, balanced, just punishment. miracles cannot be God's punishment. If a reasonable person has thought through the implications of what it would be for an omni-being to act, the reaction should be something like, "That's it? That's the best you've got? How am I supposed to believe in an omni-being on the basis of that? Any old demigod could do that. And there are good reasons to think that God would not do that." These considerations will plague all of the alleged purposes we devise for the results of a miracle. And if there does not appear to be any way that this could be God's act, then it is reasonable to conclude that God did not do it. We now have powerful reasons to accept this argument: God wouldn't act in any ways that are below full capacity. Performing a miracle would be acting below full capacity for God. Therefore, God wouldn't perform miracles.

XIII. Conclusion

Our discussions of miracles, in focusing on whether we have enough evidence to believe that one has occurred, have often neglected a more fundamental problem that upends the miracle debate for God. Even if miracles are real, neither omnipotence, nor omniscience, nor omni-benevolence are necessary in order to perform them. In fact, an infinite God would not perform miracles because miracles are below full-capacity for God, and God wouldn't act in any ways that are below full-capacity. So even if one happens, we won't be able to infer God's existence from them because God would not perform miracles.

The Atheist named Richard Swinburne by Bradley Bowen

I was reading the Martyrdom of Polycarp recently, which is "the oldest written account of a Christian martyrdom outside the New Testament." (The Apostolic Fathers, updated edition, edited and revised by Michael Holmes, p.222; hereafter: TAF). Polycarp was killed between 155 and 160 C.E:

The Martyrdom of Polycarp sets out quite clearly both the issue at stake–Lord Christ versus Lord Caesar—and the state's (as well as the general population's) view of Christians as disloyal atheists who threatened the well-being of the empire. (TAF, p.222)

Long ago, long before Joseph McCarthy became a senator, long before the John Birch society existed, long before the Boy Scouts were formed, long before the words "one nation under God" were added to the pledge of allegiance, Christians were looked upon as 'disloyal atheists'.

Polycarp was an elderly bishop of the church of Smyrna, a major seaport in the Roman province of Asia (located on the west coast of Turkey). He went into hiding, was hunted down, arrested, tried, and was then executed. His confrontation with the Roman authorities makes reference to the idea that Christians were considered to be atheists:

But as Polycarp entered the stadium, there came a voice from heaven: "Be strong, Polycarp, and act like a man." An no one saw the speaker, but those of our people who were present heard the voice. And then, as he was brought forward, there was a great tumult when they heard that Polycarp had been arrested. Therefore, when he was brought before him, the proconsul asked if he were Polycarp. And when he confessed that he was, the proconsul tried to persuade him to recant, saying, "Have respect for your age," and other such things as they are accustomed to say: "Swear by the Genius of Caesar; repent; say, 'Away with the atheists!'" So Polycarp solemnly looked at the whole crowd of lawless heathen who were in the stadium, motioned toward them with his hand, and then (groaning as he looked up to heaven) said, "Away with the atheists!"

(TAF, p.233 & 235)

Ever since Polycarp, Christians have been trying to throw the word 'atheist' at us "lawless heathen" as an insult, deflecting the application of the word away from themselves.

Now, of course Christians do believe in a god, specifically, they believe in 'God', the God of western theism. The philosopher Richard Swinburne is a Christian, and a fairly traditional one at that, so he too believes in God. Nevertheless, Christians are atheists, in that they deny the existence of many gods. Swinburne not only denies the existence of Zeus, Athena, Apollo, Ares, etc., but he also denies the existence of God as conceived of by Thomas Aquinas and other great Christian philosophers.

In The Coherence of Theism, Swinburne attempts to show that the sentence "God exists" makes a logically coherent statement. In his effort to do this, he sets aside various beliefs about God, and conceptions of God, that he quite rightly rejects as being logically incoherent.

For example, Swinburne rejects that idea of a God who is omnipotent in the sense that 'God can do anything'. God cannot make a married bachelor nor can God make a four-sided triangle, according to Swinburne. So, belief in an 'omnipotent' God, where the believer understands this to mean that God can literally do anything, is an incoherent belief which ought to be rejected in Swinburne's view. Thus, Swinburne is an atheist, in that he rejects the existence of God, conceived of in terms of that very strong sense of 'omnipotence'.

Swinburne also rejects the existence of God, where God is conceived of as being omnipotent in the sense that 'God can do anything that it is logically possible for a person to do'. It is logically possible for me to divorce my wife, but it is NOT logically possible for God to divorce my wife, at least not until AFTER he marries her (and it is also not clear that that would be possible). So, no such God exists, according to Swinburne, for the idea of such a being is logically incoherent.

There are things that it is logically possible for some persons to do, that it is not logically possible for God to do (COT, p.154).

More importantly, Swinburne rejects the existence of God, where God is conceived of as being omniscient in the sense that 'God knows everything that has ever happened and that ever will happen'. Many people, including many Christian believers, believe in such a God. But Swinburne asserts that these many devout Christian believers are mistaken, and that there is no such being.

God is a perfectly free person, according to Swinburne, and a perfectly free person cannot know with certainty what actions he/she will choose to do in the future (COT, p. 177). Perfect knowledge of the future is logically incompatible with perfect freedom; therefore, it is logically impossible for God to both be perfectly free and for God to also have perfect knowledge of the future.

God must either be perfectly free and have imperfect knowledge of the future, or else God has perfect knowledge of the future and does NOT have perfect freedom. Thus, Christians who believe in a God who is both perfectly free and who has perfect knowledge of the future believe in a God who not only does not exist, but they believe in a God who cannot possibly exist, because they believe in the existence of a being with attributes that are logically contradictory.

Swinburne also denies the existence of God conceived of as a person who exists outside of time, contrary to the view of many Christian theologians:

Most of the great Christian theologians from Augustine to Aquinas taught that God is timeless. (The Coherence of Theism, revised edition, p.223)

Not only is this conception of God impossible to reconcile with the common Christian belief that God interacts with human beings, responding to prayers and requests for forgiveness, but the idea of a person who exists outside of time is logically incoherent (COT, p.228-229). This idea requires that God observe my actions today simultaneously with observing my actions tomorrow, but that means that today is simultaneous with tomorrow, which is incoherent (COT, p.228). There can be no such being. Yet many Christians, including many great Christian philosophers and theologians have believed in such a God.

Swinburne believes that God is a source of moral obligations for human beings, but he denies that morality is in general grounded in the commands or will of God (COT, p.210, see also p.203-207). Yet, many Christian believe that God is the ultimate ground and basis for morality. Swinburne believes that basic moral principles are necessary truths, truths that would hold whether or not God existed. Basic moral principles are like basic truths of logic and mathematics. Such necessary truths exist and are true independently of the existence of God.

Thus, the idea of a God who is the ground of morality is logically incoherent in Swinburne's view. Many Christian believers hold the belief that such a deity exists, and Swinburne strongly disagrees. Not only are these many Christians mistaken in believing that such a God exists, but the God they believe in cannot possibly exist, because the very concept of this God is logically incoherent.

Swinburne rejects the belief that God is immutable, in the strong sense that God never changes in any way. According to Swinburne "Being perfectly free is incompatible with being immutable in the strong sense." (COT, p.222). But Aquinas and other Christian thinkers believe in a God who is, by definition, immutable in this strong sense. Thus Swinburne rejects belief in the existence of God as conceived of by Thomas Aquinas. Such a being does not exist, and cannot possibly exist, because the concept of an absolutely unchanging person who is perfectly free contains a logical contradiction.

Finally, although Swinburne believes that there is a sense in which God may be considered to be a 'necessary being', he rejects the belief that God is a logically necessary being. In other words, he rejects the view of some Christian thinkers that the existence of God is a necessary truth. Swinburne argues that God's existence is a logically contingent fact, not a necessary truth.The idea of a God who has logically necessary existence is incoherent. The existence of such a God is impossible, logically impossible, according to Swinburne.

So, the next time a Christian tries to throw the word 'atheist' at you or other "lawless heathen", as a term of insult, please remind him or her that one of the leading Christian philosophers of our time is also an 'atheist' in that he has strongly rejected belief in God, at least in God as conceived of by many Christian believers.

I agree with Richard Swinburne's atheism. I agree with him that many Christians believe in the existence of a god who not only does not exist but who cannot possibly exist, because they believe in a God who has logically contradictory attributes. There is, however, at least one point on which I part company with Mr. Swinburne. I believe that his God, the God that he believes in, does not exist, and I believe that his God is also logically incoherent, that his concept of God contains logical contradictions and thus cannot possibly exist.

Miracles as Evidence Against the Existence of God by Christine Overall

Most recent discussions of the concept of miracle have concentrated mainly on the relationship between miracles and scientific laws. I As a result, I believe, there has been far too little attention paid to the alleged evidential connections between the existence of miracles and the existence of God. One reason, presumably, that some philosophers and theologians have traditionally been interested in miracles is that it is assumed that their existence would be evidence-probably conclusive evidence-for the existence of God.* (And here, by "God", I mean the God of Christianity; in John Hick's definition, "the infinite, eternal, uncreated, personal reality, who has created all that exists and who is revealed to human creatures as holy and loving".3) Despite this assumption, I would nevertheless like to ask what I think (in light of the epistemic difficulties in providing evidence for the existence of a miracle) may be a sort of counter-factual question: namely, if miracles were to occur, just what would their occurrence really show? In the context of the type of definition of "miracle" used recently by some philosophers, it becomes difficult to frame the question in just this way. For they appear to build in to the concept of miracle the notion that the event is brought about by a supernatural being. Douglas Odegard, for example, claims Some who for the sake of argument make the violation of a law a condition of being a miracle would go further and add the condition that the event must have religious significance or be

produced by a god. But. . . the notion of violating a law is best understood such that we cannot justifiably claim that an event is a violation unless we have good reason to believe that it is produced by a god. Similarly, in discussing the concept of miracle, Ian Walker states that the concept of violations[of natural laws], if it is to be coherent, must have a'supernatural precondition' built into it. This means that 'violation' miracles can only be characterized on the precondition that they may be the result of a supernatural force at work . . . . Christine Overall received her Ph.D. in 1980 from the University of Toronto. She currently holds the position of Webster Fellow in the Humanities and assistant professor of philosophy at Queen's University. Kingston. Ontario. She has published papers in Religious Studies and Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society, and has papers forthcoming in The Journal of Value Inquiry and Canadian Philosophical Reviews.

And David Basinger argues that it would be useful for theologians and philosophers to refrain from defining miracles as violations of natural laws and define them rather as permanently inexplicable or coincidental direct acrs of God. Hence, to say that an event x is a miracle is already, by definition, to say that a supernatural being exists, and cannot be used as independent evidence for that being's existence. This concept of miracle, therefore, encourages us to focus on the problem of the identification of a particular event as a miracle, rather than on the exploration of the connection between a certain kind of event. called a miracle, and God. To avoid this terminological problem, in what follows I shall mean by "miracle" simply an event which is a violation of natural law or which (following Basinger) is permanently inexplicable. However, regardless of what definition is adopted, the philosophical question turns out to be the same: What is the connection between, on the one hand, the existence of an event which is a violation of natural law, or which is permanently inexplicable (a miracle, in my sense) and, on the other, the existence of God?

Some writers have claimed, at least, that the connection between the existence of miracles and the existence of God is not a straightforward one. Consider the following arguments:

(a) God is thought of as a being existing outside (in of course a nonspatial sense) space and time; he is not a part of the space-time order, but independent of it. While it makes sense to talk about influence and interference between particular things wifhin the universe, this is not the case with the whole. . . . One may ask in a similar vein whether the cause (God) can be otherwise if the effect (the miracle) is spatio-temporal. Moreover, a theist taking this line must explain how God can hear and answer requests (spatio-temporal events) without being in the space-time sphere himself. Yet, many miracles involve requests and answers.*

The point here is that a violation of natural law, or a permanently inexplicable event, occurring within space-time is not the sort of thing which a being outside space-time could produce. The problem here is not, of course, an empirical one, but a logical one. Thus the argument raises doubts about what the connection between God and miracles could possibly be.

(b) Another problem about making a connection between miracles and God is cited by Alastair McKinnon. He points out that according to "the supernatural account", God is the cause of all events. Hence, says McKinnon, "it makes no sense to say that he is the special cause of one or more particular events".g McKinnon is suggesting that the believer in God cannot have it both

ways: either all events are caused by God-in which case “it makes no sense to speak of events as specially caused by God”-or, if there are special supernatural causes of specific events, God cannot be regarded as “in any sense the cause of regular events”.’o Thus, there is a very real peculiarity in the sort of overdetermination which appears to result from trying to maintain that a miracle is caused by God.

(c) George Chryssides presents an ingenious argument according to which, if an event is a miracle, that is, a violation of a scientific law, then it cannot be attributed to an agent of any sort, divine or not; if it can be so attributed, then it is not a miracle. His reason is that “theassignment of agency implies predictability”, the subsumption of the act under scientific law, yet this is impossible in the case of a miracle. We assign agency when we have noted that similar actions by other agents in similar circumstances have been followed by similar subsequent events;’z in the case of a miracle, however, we have a unique event to be assigned to a unique agent. Thus, once again, thequestion is raised as to how a miracle could possibly be connected with God. But in spite of these sceptical views, there has not yet been a sufficiently radical questioning of the evidential connection between miracles and God. Odegard, for example, believes that an event identified as a miracle cannot be used as evidence for the existence of a god which is its cause. But his reason is that in order to say that the event is a miracle, we first have to say that it is caused by a god.” Similarly, Walker believes that “violation miracles” cannot “form the foundation of any sort of religious polemic”, because “any polemic which endeavoured to demonstrate the existence of supernatural forces by means of the violation concept of the miraculous would have to assume the very existence of that which was the object of proof in order to maintain consistency in the proof itselr. By contrast, I propose the suggestion that if a miracle in the sense used here were to Qccur, it in fact would constitute evidence against the existence of the Christian God. So, far from its being the case that identifying event x as a miracle would require one first to know that it is caused by God or a god, on the contrary, if one knew that God exists, then probably nothing could be identified as a miracle, and conversely, if event x could be identified as a miracle, one would have good reason to believe that God does not exist. Put simply, my view is that a miracle as an event which is a violation of natural law or which is permanently inexplicable is inconsistent with the concept of God. I shall now try to give some defence of this suggestion. In so doing I shall perhaps be led into the quagmires of anthropomorphism, but perhaps this is inevitable in dealing with what seems to be an irretrievably anthropomorphic concept. I propose, first, that we must ask some fundamental questions about the nature of a being which would cause miracles. Douglas K. Erlandson has suggested that the issue here is one of appropriateness: “the believer regards certain acts as appropriate to his God, other acts as inappropriate”. Is But to speak of “appropriateness” suggests, perhaps, a sort of cosmic politeness; so I think that a better word here would be “consistency”. Are events which violate natural law, or which are permanently inexplicable, consistent with the nature of God? In the past, some philosophers and theologians have urged us to consider the supposed order, regularity, and harmony of the universe as evidence of the existence of a benign and omnipotent god. But if order, regularity, and harmony constitute evidence for God, then miracles cannot also be accepted as evidence for his existence, for they are, to follow the metaphor, dissonances in the harmony, holes in the patterned fabric of the universe. Hence, a Christian believer cannot have it both ways. A miracle, a violation of natural law or a permanently inexplicable event, is a moment of chaos, a gap in the spatio-temporal structure. If

one were to occur it would therefore have to constitute evidence against the Christian God's existence. It might, however, be objected that a miracle is not just a meaningless hole in nature's fabric, for after all, it is claimed to have a purpose, a function. As Erlandson remarks, "Inexplicability or mystery is an element of the miraculous, but it must be of a certain sort-it must fit a pattern1"-not, presumably, a pattern of natural events (for it disrupts them)-but an intelligible pattern of divine activity. But then the focus of our interest must switch to a consideration of God's supposed purposes and intentions. As Herbert Burhenn remarks, questions about the attribution of miracles are "teleological rather than caussl in character".*

In particular, is a violation of law or an inexplicable event congruent with the purposes of a benevolent God? I would suggest that it is not. For such an event is misleading to human beings who, as knowledge-seekers, attempt to understand the world by discerning the regularities and patterns in it. The extreme rarity of miracles, and the difficulties and controversies in identifying them, are an impediment to the growth of scientific and philosophical comprehension. A benevolent God would not mislead his people. Two related answers to this argument are possible. First, it might be argued that the occurrence of a miracle does not, in fact, have this puzzling effect, because the event itself is part of a pattern of the miraculous. Thus, for the religious believer, two very general patterns are discernible: the pattern of natural events, which is studied by science, and the pattern of divine events, consisting of interventions in the natural order. As Erlandson remarks, the pattern that the believer perceives extends to many events. Rarely will the believer see only one event as miraculous. Rather, he can point to a series of events which he perceives to beads of his God. This series presentsan overall pattern to the believer, from which he can ascertain the nature of his God, and which provides him justification for deciding that a particular occurrence is a miracle.' Unfortunately, one fact seems to militate against this response, and that is the rarity of miracles. It has a twofold implication. On the one hand, if miracles really do occur infrequently, as they seem to, it will be difficult to discern a pattern of meaning in their occurrence, and there will be controversy as to what the pattern is. On the other hand, if their occurrence were not so rare, then to that degree they would be more disruptive of human efforts to see the world as forming a coherent, unified, consistent pattern. Thus Erlandson is mistaken in supposing that "the believer can hold that some events are to be explained by appeal to the miraculous without in any way impugning scientific autonomy."Z'J For, by its very nature, any alleged "pattern" of miraculous occurrences is inconsistent with the pattern of natural events which science seeks to account for, and there is very real epistemic dissonance between the two systems. A second possible response to the claim that a benevolent God would not mislead his people by causing events which are a violation of natural law or are permanently inexplicable is the following: Some slight confusion in our growing understanding of the world is but a small price to pay for the other goods that a miracle would afford us. For example, "It might accomplish some positive good, such as healing or saving a life. . . . It might aid in the communication of divine teaching. . . . . It might serve to revive religious awareness.'*

But two important questions can be raised about such possible purposes. First, in being accomplished through miracles, they would seem to make use of human weaknesses-for example, fear, suggestibility, ignorance, and awe of the unknown. Second, and more important, this appeal

to God’s purposes creates an opening for some of the same moves that are made in the argument from evil against God’s existence:

[Olne could ask why an omnipotent God does not accomplish more and more good miraculously, or why he did not create a better world which would not require miraculous intervention to correct its faults. If accomplishing good, communicating divine teaching, or reviving religious awareness are divine purposes, miracles seem scarcely adequate to their accomplishment, for few people have been helped, and many remain sceptical. Certainly, if we consider the standard Biblical examples of miracles, they reflect a certain caprice-one is cured, another is not; bias-in favcur of one group of people over another; and triviality. These events do not appear to be consistent with the sorts of purposes that might be supposed to be held by an omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent being. And even if one were not to use these events as standard examples of miracles, still the very fact that a miracle is an event, and therefore limited in space and time (albeit detached from the natural space-time continuum) means that it is inherently handicapped for conveying the purposes of a limitless God. I conclude, then, that the reservations of philosophers such as Erlandson, McKinnon, and Chryssides about the connection between miracles and God are a step in the right direction, but that they do not go far enough. For we must question the underlying assumptioq, ordinarily made by all parties to the debate, that if a miracle, in the sense of a violation of natural law or a permanently inexplicable event, were to occur, then it would be evidence for God’s existence. On the contrary, if my arguments are correct, then if a miracle were to occur we would have a very good reason for denying that the Christian God exists. Paul Diet claims that proving the existence of a being who deserves some of the predicates (e.g., sufficient power to cause a violation of scientific law or a permanently inexplicable event) “God” normally gets would go some way toward proving the existence of God himself. But if I am right, such a being, if it exists, could not have the characteristics we usually attribute to God, and thus could not be the Christian God.

Miracles and God: A Reply to Robert A. H. Larmer

In a paper published ten years ago (Overall, 1985) I argued that, contrary to religious and philosophical orthodoxy, if a miracle were to occur, it would constitute evidence against the existence of the Judaeo-Christian God. I defined "miracle" as an event that violates natural law, or that is permanently inexplicable. I gave three main reasons for my claim. First, a miracle would be a flaw in the order and regularity of the universe—contrary to what one would expect from an omnipotent God. Second, a miracle would be incongruent with the purposes of a beneficent God, for it would impede the growth of philosophical and scientific knowledge, and would at best appeal to human weaknesses—fear, suggestibility, ignorance, and awe of the unknown—an appeal unworthy of a perfect God. Third, events standardly identified as miracles mostly help very few and convert only a handful; if taken as the handiwork of a transcendent agent, they reflect apparent caprice, bias, and triviality, characteristics incompatible with those assigned to God.

Larmer presents an extensive rebuttal to my arguments. In this article I evaluate Larmer's case against my claims and assess its strength, drawing both on the book and on several of Larmer's published papers.

Methodology and Definitions

Larmer and I disagree, first, about a fundamental matter of methodology. Before considering what events are properly to be called miracles, he asserts, one must first give an account of what a miracle is. He claims that I reverse the problem: that I assume it is possible to identify miracles as a class, and then attempt to "abstract a definition" of "miracle" from surveying the class's members. I then redefine the term, producing a definition "that has little resemblance to the way the word is actually used." I fail to examine the logically prior question of whether my definitions have "captured what we ordinarily mean by the term miracle" (Larmer 1988b, p. 80).

Although I am not sure that I saw abstracting a definition as a major problem of my article, Larmer has correctly identified the different starting points which each of us adopts. He takes as foundational an interpretation that he claims is "what we ordinarily mean by the term miracle," and identifies four criteria (1988b, p. 5).

A miracle

(1) is a physical event beyond the ability of unaided nature to produce;

(2) is brought about by a rational agent;

(3) is extraordinary; and

(4) has religious significance. After setting forth these criteria, which an unidentified reference group ("we") allegedly attributes to the term, he then seeks to identify those events that are accurately describable by the word, and argues that such events would constitute good evidence for the existence of the Christian God.

However, it is not self-evident that Larmer's approach is the correct one. It is just as useful to take those events standardly recognized as miracles—in Scripture, ritual, and religious culture generally—as exemplars of the term and then attempt to extract a meaning for the term from observation of the members of the representative set. Larmer himself does not hesitate to recognize and make use of such exemplars. As a self-identified Christian, he refers to stock biblical examples, including "the Virgin Birth, the feeding of the multitudes, the healing of the sick and the Resurrection" (1988b, p. 116). In addition, he creates hypothetical examples, such as "the instantaneous regrowth of a man's withered arm" following prayer for such an event by religious persons of exemplary character (1988b, p. 99). He also provides the fictitious example of a man, also of "exemplary character," who enacts remarkable cures— restoring damaged eyes to sight, and reversing supposedly terminal diseases (1988b, p. 56). We are to imagine that this man's healing capacities are not affected by distance, physical screening, or the specific disease or injury of the person needing healing (1988b, p. 58).

Miracles and God

The point of these scriptural and fictitious examples is that Larmer has no difficulty providing examples of miracles. In so doing, however, he has no apparent recourse to his own list of criteria, but instead relies directly on Christian history and ideology. Indeed, in a paper published in 1989, he acknowledges the significance of "paradigm cases" of miracles (1989, p. 11), cases that obviate the need for explicit criteria for miracles. My argument is that events such as these, which I readily

accept as standard examples of supposed miracles, can be described generally as violating natural laws, or as permanently inexplicable (inexplicable, that is, in terms of natural laws). As such, they are incompatible with the existence of the Christian God.

So, not only do Larmer and I disagree about how to begin the investigation of miracles; we also disagree about the appropriate concept of miracle with which to work. I now want to consider the plausibility of Larmer's concept and show that it is unacceptable. The first problem with his set of criteria is that, for the purposes of arguing for the existence of God, it begs the question of the connection between miraculous events and God, for his concept of miracle includes the concept of supernatural causation. It is trivially true that, if there are events that nature would not produce on its own, that are supernaturally caused, that override nature (Larmer 1988b, p. 8), and that have religious significance (Larmer 1988b, p. 9), then there is a god. But to adopt such a concept is to preclude any examination of the possible relationship between God and events that are labelled miraculous. My claim is that this relationship cannot be regarded as straightforward and unproblematic; it must be critically assessed. Larmer is unperturbed by the circularity of his concept. He concedes that calling an event a miracle presupposes the truth of theism. "But I do not accept the common assumption that it is a consequence of this view that an event we are prepared to call a miracle cannot serve as independent evidence for God's existence" (1988b, p. 113). He adds: "we do not need to believe that theism is true before we can decide whether or not we should label an event a miracle" (1988b, p. 113).

The problem with these observations is that, if we were ever to identify an event as a miracle in Larmer's sense of the term, then de facto we would have decided that God exists. There could be no argument from the existence of a miracle to the existence of God. A miracle, in Larmer's sense, cannot function as evidence for the existence of God, for to call an event a miracle is, by definition, to assert the existence of God. The second problem with Larmer's definition lies in his inappropriate anthropomorphism with respect to the natural world. He repeatedly describes a miracle as an event that "overrides nature" (1988b, p. 20). A miracle is said to be "an overriding of nature that is in accord with God's purposes" (1988b, p. 14); the product of "an agent not bound by nature" (1988b, p. 9). In these descriptions, "nature" is implicitly represented as a fallible person, one who is usually in control of what happens in physical reality, but whose will can be overcome or overridden by a being with superior, indeed transcendent, powers. This inappropriate anthropomorphism sets the stage for the key move in Larmer's defence of the existence of miracles, in his sense: he rejects the standard form of the Law of Conservation of Energy.

Naturalism, Miracles, and the Law of Conservation of Energy A substantial component of Larmer's project is to show that, although miracles overcome or override nature, they do not violate laws of nature. Instead, "a miracle, in the strong sense of an event which nature would not produce on its own, can occur in a world which behaves completely in accordance with the laws of nature" (1988b, p. 79). For example, although the laws of nature show that virgins do not conceive "unless nature is overridden in some way," they "do not entail that such an event cannot happen or is antecedently improbable" (1988b, p. 96). How is this possible? Larmer explains that, in working a miracle, God creates or annihilates a unit or units of mass/energy. In so doing, he breaks no law of nature, but rather changes the material conditions to which the laws of nature apply (1988b, p.

20). In a paper published in 1992, for example, he suggests that God might have enacted the miracle of the loaves and fishes by creating loaves and fishes ex nihilo: "He would not thereby violate any of the laws of nature which apply to the behaviour of the matter making up the loaves and fishes" (1992, p. 89). The latter claim seems puzzling. The matter of fishes develops from other fishes; the matter of loaves is the product of flour, yeast, water, and salt. If loaves and fishes come into existence ex nihilo, such an event appears to violate natural laws governing the origins of loaves and fishes. In order to overcome such problems, Larmer calls for the rejection of what he calls the "strong form" of the law (or principle) of conservation of energy, namely, that "Energy can neither be created nor destroyed, although its form may change" (1988b, p. 24). Given the assumption that energy can be created or destroyed, then it is possible for God to work a miracle without breaking a law of nature. If one does not reject the strong form of the principle, then, says Larmer, one is ruling out theism a priori (1988b, pp. 25, 26). But this assumption is questionable. It is not inconceivable that an all-powerful God could have a created a universe in which the strong form of the law holds.' In his book Larmer offers no argument to show that this is impossible. Perhaps he simply assumes that such a universe would be incompatible with an interventionist, miracle-producing God of the sort he is concerned to defend.

Larmer claims that the strong form of the law of conservation of energy is a "defining-postulate" of a belief system or worldview that he calls "physicalism" (1988b, p. 61). Physicalism is defined as "a species of philosophical monism according to which all that exists and is truly real is physical" (1988b, p. 136, n. I).4 Instead of the strong form of the principle, Larmer advocates acceptance of a weaker form, according to which, "in an isolated system [that is, a system not causally influenced by something other than itself] the total amount of energy remains constant, although its form may change" (1988b, p. 24). Larmer claims that it is the weak form of the principle that is directly supported by experimental evidence, and to derive the strong form requires a further inference (1988b, p. 61). However, he adds, there does not and cannot exist any additional body of empirical evidence that permits the derivation of the strong form of the principle (1992, p. 90). "The most [the physicalist] can ever show by measuring quantities of energy is that it is conserved in a causally isolated system" (1988b, p. 69). Larmer offers no further defence of this latter claim. Perhaps he is implicitly appealing to human beings' finite nature as investigators. If the defender of the strong form of the law of conservation of energy claims to present some evidence to show that, without qualification, energy can neither be created nor destroyed, Larmer might respond that his opponent must temper that claim by acknowledging that it is confined to those portions of the universe we have explored. It is simply not possible for us to move outside our "causally isolated system." As finite, fallible beings, we cannot make a claim that goes beyond our local neighbourhood. If Larmer is relying on this assumption, there are at least two problems with it. First, it begs the question in Larmer's favour. If we must stress our limited knowledge, which is confined only to our local portion of the universe, then human ignorance is put squarely at the forefront of the theory, and the theory opens the door for postulating divine intervention. It makes the leap to the hypothesis of transcendent agency appear to be very easy. Yet through this move the theory at the same time calls itself into question. For if we must stress the limited nature of human knowledge with respect to one natural law, there seems to be no reason not to similarly qualify other statements of natural law. But if our knowledge of the operations of the natural world is recognized as being limited in all respects, why should we not use this limitation as a reason not

to resort to God as an explanation for certain unusual events? Instead of leaping to infer divine intervention as their explanation, let us suspend belief, recognize our human limitations, and await the gathering of further knowledge. Consider Larmer's own example of the virgin birth. Among the human participants in the drama of Jesus's conception and birth (setting aside, because their existence is controversial, the possible actions of angels), we could have only Mary's and Joseph's word that Mary was a virgin. Indeed, Mary's own view of her condition may not have been accurate: it is possible that Joseph could have raped her while she was unconscious; hence, Mary herself would not know that she was not a virgin. It therefore comes down to Joseph's claim that he did not have sexual intercourse with Mary—and that no other man did. Moreover, to preserve the plausibility of the virgin birth, we must assume that no other process—such as a primitive form of artificial insemination—was involved. From this perspective, the number of assumptions that must be made about Mary's sexual and reproductive life, and the reliance that must be placed on Mary's and Joseph's beliefs and claims about her condition, make belief in a virgin birth highly improbable. Rather than believing that Jesus was the result of the divine impregnation of a virgin, it seems more plausible to assume that Jesus was conceived through human sexual intercourse. Larmer would reject such a move, at least partly because he rejects naturalism. At best, he says, naturalism begs the question of whether nature is an isolated system not subject to outside intrusions. At worst, it "is vulnerable to the charge that it is explanatorily impotent by virtue of the fact that it proves compatible with any conceivable state of affairs or series of events in the world" (1988b, p. 59). But it is impossible to accept that naturalism is explanatorily impotent. The naturalistic hypothesis has an admirable record of gradually enabling human beings to come to understand the regular workings of the world. It is therefore reasonable, in cases of puzzling events, to await explanation through naturalistic mechanisms. Defenders of miracles have not shown that naturalism has any conspicuous record of failure to account for such events. Indeed, Larmer offers no arguments showing that the examples of miracles he cites cannot be explained in naturalistic terms. Taking the long view of human epistemic progress, with our present awareness of how the human capacity to understand and explain hitherto mysterious events has grown and changed, the naturalistic hypothesis does not look improbable. What would the reaction be if we could, per impossibile, convey a television or an airplane back to, say, eighteenthcentury England? Some would be inclined to call such devices miraculous—whether in my sense of an event that violates natural law or is permanently inexplicable, or, in Larmer's sense, of an extraordinary physical event beyond the ability of unaided nature to produce, brought about by a rational agent, and possessing religious significance. Such a response is a reaction to unusual events one is not (yet) able to explain.

In 1984 Larmer wrote, "One may endorse the principle of first seeking a natural explanation of an event without thereby being committed to the position that a supernatural explanation of an event can never be legitimately postulated." The logical possibility that revising a scientific law may produce an explanation of an event previously classified as a miracle does not imply that it is always more rational to believe that all events have natural explanations (1984, p. 6). But naturalism does not merely have logical possibility on its side; it has the accumulated force of centuries of practical accomplishment. Over and over in the history of science, revisions of scientific laws have yielded new explanations of hitherto mysterious phenomena. Resort to explanation by God's intervention, through the creation or annihilation of energy, has no such

record of achievement. Hence, the naturalistic hypothesis is more rational than the divine intervention hypothesis. Given the limits of human knowledge, Larmer provides no independent reasons for making the leap to God as a default position for explaining unusual events. In 1988 he claimed that from the mere fact that one class, such as the class of non-miracles, contains a great many more members than another, such as the class of miracles, we cannot conclude that "the probability that any particular miracle occurred is low." Instead, to determine whether something exists, we must consider all the evidence (1988a, p. 21). But an analogy will show that this argument is flawed. The class of singleton human births contains a great many more members than the class of quintuplet human births. If a claim were made that a set of quintuplets was born, say, two centuries ago, we could legitimately conclude that the probability of any such birth is low—sufficient, perhaps, to require us to at least suspend belief about claims of its occurrence. Similarly, the willing if temporary suspension of belief about the explanation of unusual events is a more plausible step than the postulation as their cause of an omnipotent God who both creates and destroys energy. As John Collier notes, "The fact that [miracles] are unusual implies that we have abundant contrary evidence that events of that sort do not happen" (Collier 1986, p. 350). The burden of proof—or, rather, the burden of presenting evidence—rests on Larmer to show that the supernatural hypothesis is preferable to an agnostic perspective on such events.

Larmer asserts that, while it is logically possible that a revision of scientific law might provide an explanation for an event previously dubbed a miracle, it is also logically possible that "no revision would enable one to offer a natural explanation of such an event" (1984, p. 7). Were such an extraordinary situation as the latter to prevail, however, it does not follow that a supernatural explanation would be warranted. In fact, if my arguments are correct, such an explanation would be ruled out. One would simply have to say that there is a hole in the explanatory fabric of our knowledge.

Larmer's Response to the Argument from "Cognitive Evil" Larmer characterizes arguments such as those I presented in "Miracles as Evidence Against the Existence of God" (Overall 1985) as claiming that miracles constitute "cognitive evils" (Larmer 1988b, p. 115). He presents a general refutation of such arguments:

[E]ither the existence of evil in the world proves that God—conceived as being perfectly good and omnipotent—does not exist or it does not. If it proves God does not exist then there is no need to consider the issue of miracles; if it does not then it is hard to see how a lessening of evil in the world—the healing of a child, say—can be seen as intensifying the problem of evil (1988b, p. 115). The use of the word "proves" in this context seems too strong. Although the history of the philosophy of religion is replete with references to "proofs" both for and against the existence of God, it is more appropriate to the nature of the debate to speak of the accumulation or weight of evidence on either side. Use of the word "proof" implies that the issue is, or at least can be, definitively and uncontroversially settled. Such an implication is out of proportion to the reality of the debate. But even if we substitute for "proves" the phrase "provides evidence for," Larmer's claim about the significance of the argument from evil misrepresents the issue its various forms raise. The general issue is the weight or significance of evil—primarily in the forms of suffering and injustice—and whether the existence of such evil constitutes strong evidence against the

existence of God. My argument with respect to miracles is that claims about the occurrence of miracles greatly increase the strength of the argument from evil, by pointing to the botched nature of the existing world, the makeshift and arbitrary solutions in which God is said to engage, and the arbitrary and puzzling nature of allegedly divine acts. If a miracle, in the sense of an event that violates natural law or that is permanently inexplicable, were to occur, it would be incompatible with the kind of being the Judaeo-Christian God is said to be. Larmer states that my claim that any alleged pattern of miraculous occurrences cannot be consistent with the pattern of natural events begs the question of whether nature constitutes the whole of reality or is only a partial system within it (1988b, p. 81). But this response is puzzling. Miracles are, Larmer acknowledges, "explanatory hiatuses" (1988b, p. 89). Bearing in mind those events standardly offered as exemplars of miracles, it would seem that part of the point behind miracles is their disruptiveness, their extraordinariness, their failure to blend in. Indeed, Larmer approvingly quotes C. S. Lewis, who says that a miracle is not "interlocked with the previous history of Nature" (1988b, p. 81). If miracles are somehow consistent with a greater system, of which nature is only a (small?) part, then the epistemic problem of comprehending that consistency is transferred to understanding the greater system. Nonetheless, Larmer claims, "To call an event a miracle is to explain it; it is to explain it in terms of God's purposes and desires" (1988b, p. 81). But such an explanation is at best obscure. On the one hand, Larmer approvingly quotes Richard Swinburne, who says, "Miracles are events with a point in the overall scheme of things and so in a sense very regular" (Larmer 1988b, p. 10).

But Larmer also says that an explanation in terms of an agent's—any agent's—intention or purpose need have no close connection to the notion of prediction (1988b, p. 48). Ordinarily, knowing someone's purposes and intentions provides an indication of what the person is likely to do in the future. Knowing S's purpose gives me an indication of the actions, or range of actions, she is

likely to undertake in order to accomplish her purpose. However, if relating an event to a transcendent agent's purposes does not help us in any way to predict the agent's future actions, then the notion of "purpose" becomes opaque. Ascribing an anomalous, inexplicable event to God's agency, then, sheds no light on the reason for the event, its intent, or its place within a larger pattern. In other words, ascribing an amazing event to God's agency does nothing to make it comprehensible. Thus, if a miracle were to occur it would obfuscate human understanding of the world. Events alleged to be miracles are also often trivial in nature. An excellent example is Jesus's conversion of water into wine to accommodate his mother and other guests at a wedding at Cana. Considering the range of misfortunes and needs in the world, running out of wine at a wedding seems a small problem. According to Larmer, the concept of miracle involves being "brought about by a rational agent" (1988b, p. 5), but the conversion of water to wine does not seem rational. The conversion violates natural laws, does not cohere with anything else known about the substances water and wine, and fails to fit into a larger pattern of divine purpose. Indeed, when first asked to respond to the wineless feast, Jesus himself denied any wish to take action (John 2:4).)

As evidence of the incompatibility of miracles and God, I have asserted that miracles reflect caprice and bias (Overall 1985, p. 351). Larmer makes a number of admissions that inadvertently support my claims. "Almost by definition, miracles are non-regular, unpredictable events" (1988b,

p. 43). Miracles are "not events . . . that most people could expect to observe directly" (1988b, p. 99), and "there is no a priori reason to suppose that all ages should be equally endowed with miracles" (1988b, p. 107). Miracles "recur when certain relevant antecedent conditions are repeated" (1988b, p. 51), yet they are not "of some repeatable type" (1988b, p. 52). The reasons for their occurrence in some cultures and not others, to some people and not others, and at some times and not others, are not evident. The theist, admits Larmer, may not be able to explain why God heals a child in one instance but allows nature to "take its course" in another, but this does not imply that God lacks a "morally sufficient reason for performing a miracle in one case and not in another" (1988b, pp. 115-16). Since Larmer provides us with no justification, we must apparently take it on faith that God has a "morally sufficient reason" for favouring some but not others with his miracles. But in the absence of such justification, it seems plausible to conclude that any transcendent being who performs such acts is, indeed, capricious and biased. Larmer gives as examples of miracles the feeding of multitudes and the healing of the sick. Why are some healed and others not? Why are some fed while others starve? Larmer offers no explanation or rationale for these distinctions. Religious sceptics have long argued that the profound injustices and intense suffering experienced by many people are evidence against the existence of an omnipotent, beneficent God. If there are unusual events that seemingly arbitrarily help some of the suffering but not others, these events contribute to the strength of the argument from evil. If God favours some people and not others, then he is capricious and biased. If such miracles occur, they are evidence against the existence of an omni-beneficent being. Larmer suggests that God's alleged miraculous interventions are a matter of God's adapting himself to "emergent needs." The idea is that, in a world of human beings endowed with free will, God intervenes "in the usual course of events so as to fulfil certain of His purposes which might otherwise be thwarted" (1988b, p. 120). The problem with this view is that it is hard to discern what God's purposes might be; to the extent that they are discernible, they do not seem to reflect a transcendent being who is omnipotent, omniscient, and beneficent. It might be argued that some people are more deserving of God's help than others. Larmer states that the conditions for the occurrence of a miracle pertain "not so much to the physical as to the moral realm," and "what determines whether one occurs is not your physical circumstances, but rather the state of your heart before God" (1992, p. 95). But such claims cannot explain God's failure to provide miraculous interventions to help innocent children, about whom it is implausible to claim that they are less deserving of God's assistance. If the healing of a child is "a lessening of evil in the world" (Larmer 1988b, p. 115), it is nonetheless an arbitrary lessening, which overlooks other equally deserving cases. The virgin birth is an example of an event that reflects caprice and bias. The idea of an individual's being born of a virgin reflects distaste for human sexual activity. It also subscribes to notions of female purity: women are on a higher level of goodness prior to sexual activity; hence, Mary was "pure" enough to bear the son of God. It is unclear why a perfect being would care about such matters, and Larmer's assurance that God has a "morally sufficient reason" is unfounded. In conclusion, Robert Larmer does not succeed in defeating my claim that the occurrence of a miracle constitutes good evidence against the existence of the Judaeo-Christian God. Larmer's redefinition of "miracle" is circular. His distinction between violating a natural law and merely overcoming it via God's creation or destruction of energy is specious. And his attempt to show that miracles are the product of a rational, beneficent, omnipotent being, and consistent with that being's purposes, is inadequate.

Another possibility is suggested by Neil W. MacGill, who points out that there is no reason to suppose an omnipotent God would choose to enact miracles by creating and annihilating energy rather than, for example, creating a world governed by laws that "do not operate with absolute universality" (MacGill 1992, p. 86). In his 1992 paper, Larmer argues that the strong form of the principle of conservation of energy is incompatible with any theory that implies either the creation or the beginning of the universe, whether as events in time or not in time (1992, pp. 91, 93). Hence, both the theist who believes that God created all that exists and the sceptic who believes that the universe emerged from something like a "big bang" first cause must reject the strong form of the principle. He defines "worldview" as "a coherent, or at least apparently coherent, set of basic beliefs about the fundamental character of reality" (1988b, p. 83). Throughout much of his book Larmer discusses physicalism as if it were the only alternative to theism. For example, in Chapter 6, "World-Views and Falsification," he takes the task of the religious believer to be to elaborate and defend "a world-view other than physicalism," namely, theism (1988b, p. 75). Only in the last chapter, "Miracles and Apologetics," does Larmer acknowledge the existence of any worldviews other than theism and physicalism: "the rivals to theism are not many. Excluding physicalism, plausible alternative worldviews are limited to pantheism and panentheism" (1988b, p. 123). (Whereas the pantheist holds that there is no ontological distinction between God and the world [p. 124], the panentheist regards God as not the efficient but the formal cause of the world [p. 125].) What is problematic about this catalogue of "plausible" worldviews is that it omits, without explanation or even acknowledgement, any mention of the possibility of a dualistic metaphysics that employs concepts of the physical and the mental without assuming that one form of the mental is the divine. (However, the possibility of such a worldview is implicitly recognized in Larmer's earlier paper, "Mind-Body Interaction and the Conservation of Energy" [1986].) Of course, if Larmer is right in believing that miracles, in his sense of the term, occur, then there may be no "causally isolated systems." (He nowhere indicates how systems are individuated and delimited.) God's intervention shows, by definition, that a "system" is not isolated. Larmer believes that God has intervened in the natural world in a variety of ways and circumstances, and could intervene elsewhere if he chose. Hence, from this perspective, the weak form of the principle may turn out to be empty. A similar disproportion is located in Larmer's distinction between confirmation and plausibility. A belief is said to be "plausible" if it is a "reasonable belief to hold on the basis of available evidence" (1988b, p. 66). On the other hand, a belief is said to be "confirmed" if "the evidence in some way guarantees that the belief is true" (1988b, pp. 66-67). The notion of a guarantee is, presumably, metaphorical, but it implies a much higher level of assurance than that to which we may usually be entitled with respect to debates about God. (Larmer acknowledges that a "physicalist" would say this [1988b, p. 67].) In my previous article I claimed that, as an event limited in space and time, a miracle is inherently inadequate to convey God's purposes. Larmer objects that God could only convey his purposes to spatio-temporal creatures through a particular event or series of events: "Unless she is prepared to argue that it is logically impossible that God can communicate with spatio-temporal creatures at all, Overall cannot claim that the mere fact that miracles are events limited in time and space entails that they are inadequate vehicles for conveying God's purposes" (1988b, p. 82). The issue here, however, is the question of the compatibility of miracles and the concept of God. If God is infinite, omnipotent, and omniscient, then any single event or series of events human beings may witness could not be adequate to

convey God to us. At best, only infinite nature in its entirety can begin to reflect God, in the Judaeo-Christian concept. This is one reason that the teleological and cosmological arguments for the existence of God are less weak than the argument from miracles. Although this example provides the title for Larmer's book, he does not discuss it. In this supposed miracle it is difficult to see how Larmer's notion that the enactment of a miracle is the result of the creation or destruction of energy applies. For the miracle at Cana involves no creation or destruction, but rather the metamorphosis of one substance into another, contrary to the natural characteristics of both

Can God's Existence be Disproved? By J. N. Findlay

THE course of philosophical development has been full of attempted proofs of the existence of God. Some of these have sought a basis in the bare necessities of thought, while others have tried to found themselves on the facts of experience. And, of these latter, some have founded themselves on very general facts, as that something exists or that something is in motion, while others have tried to build on highly special facts, as that living beings are put together in a purposive manner, or that human beings are subject to certain improbable urges and passions, such as the zeal for righteousness, the love for useless truths and unprofitable beauties, as well as the many specifically religious needs and feelings. The general philosophical verdict is that none of these " proofs " is truly compelling. The proofs based on the necessities of thought are universally regarded as fallacious: it is not thought possible to build bridges between mere abstractions and concrete existence. The proofs based on the general facts of existence and motion are only felt to be valid by a minority of thinkers, who seem quite powerless to communicate this sense of validity to others. And while most thinkers would accord weight to arguments resting on the special facts we have mentioned, they wouldn't think such arguments successful in ruling out a vast range of counter-possibilities. Religious people have, in fact, come to acquiesce in the total absence of any cogent proofs of the Being they believe in: they even find it positively satisfying that something so far surpassing clear conception should also surpass the possibility of demonstration. And non-religious people willingly mitigate their rejection with a tinge of agnosticism: they don't so much deny the existence of a God, as the existence of good reasons for believing in Him. We shall, however, maintain in this essay that there isn't room, in the case we are examining, for all these attitudes of tentative surmise and doubt. For we shall try to show that the Divine Existence can only be conceived, in a religiously satisfactory manner, if we also conceive it as something inescapable and necessary, whether for thought or reality. From which it follows that our modern denial of necessity or rational evidence for such an existence amounts to a demonstration that there cannot be a God. Before we develop this argument, we must, however, give This content downloaded from greater precision to our use of the term " God ". For it is possible to say that there are nearly as many " Gods " as there are speakers and worshippers, and while existence may be confidently asserted or denied of some of them, we should feel more hesitant in the case of others. It is one thing, plainly, to pronounce on God's existence, if He be taken to be some ancient, shapeless stone, or if we identify Him with the bearded Father of the Sistine ceiling, and quite another matter, if we make of him an " all-pervasive, immaterial intelligence ", or characterise him in some yet more negative and analogical manner. We shall, however, choose an indirect approach, and pin God down for our purposes as the " adequate object of religious attitudes ". Plainly we find it possible to gather together, under the blanket term "religious ", a large range of cases of

possible action, linked together by so many overlapping 1 affinities that we are ready to treat them as the varying " expressions " of a single " attitude " or " policy ". And plainly we find it possible to indicate the character of that attitude by a number of descriptive phrases which, though they may err individually by savouring too strongly of particular cases, nevertheless permit us, in their totality, to draw a rough boundary round the attitude in question. Thus we might say, for instance, that a religious attitude was one in which we tended to abase ourselves before some object, to defer to it wholly, to devote ourselves to it with unquestioning enthusiasm, to bend the knee before it, whether literally or metaphorically. These phrases, and a large number of similar ones, would make perfectly plain the sort of attitude we were speaking of, and would suffice to mark it off from cognate attitudes which are much less unconditional and extreme in their tone. And clearly similar phrases would suffice to fix the boundaries of religious feeling. We might describe religious frames of mind as ones in which we felt ready to abase ourselves before some object, to bend the knee before it, and so forth. Here, as elsewhere, we find ourselves indicating the felt character of our attitudes, by treating their inward character as, in some sense, a concentrated and condensed substitute for appropriate lines of action, a way of speaking that accords curiously with the functional significance of the inward.2 But not only do we incorporate, in the meanings of our various names for attitudes, a This word is added to avoid the suggestion that there must be one pervasive affinity linking together all the actions commonly called " religious ". Whatever the philosophical " ground " for it may be, this plainly is the way in which we do describe the " inner quality " of our felt attitudes. reference to this readiness for appropriate lines of action: we also incorporate in these meanings a reference to the sorts of things or situations to which these attitudes are the normal or appropriate responses. For, as a matter of fact, our attitudes are not indifferently evoked in any setting: there is a range of situations in which they normally and most readily occur. And though they may at times arise in circumstances which are not in this range, they are also readily dissipated by the consciousness that such circumstances are unsuitable or unusual. Thus fear is an attitude very readily evoked in situations with a character of menace or potential injury, and it is also an attitude very readily allayed by the clear perception that a given situation isn't really dangerous. And anger, likewise, is an attitude provoked very readily by perverse resistance and obstructive difficulty in some object, and is also very readily dissipated, even in animals, by the consciousness that a given object is innocent of offence. All attitudes, we may say, presume characters in their objects, and are, in consequence, strengthened by the discovery that their objects have these characters, as they are weakened by the discovery that they really haven't got them. Anid not only do we find this out empirically: we also incorporate it in the meanings of our names for attitudes. Thus attitudes are said to be " normal ", " fully justified " and so forth, if we find them altered in a certain manner (called " appropriate ") by our knowledge of the actual state of things, whereas we speak of them as " queer " or " senseless " or " neurotic ", if they aren't at all modified by this knowledge of reality. We call it abnormal, from this poinlt of view, to feel a deep-set fear of mice, to rage maniacally at strangers, to greet disasters with a hebephrenic giggle, whereas we think it altogether normal to deplore deep losses deeply, or to fear grave dangers gravely. And so an implicit reference to some standard object-which makes an attitude either normal or abnormal-is part of what we ordinarily mean by all our names for attitudes, and can be rendered explicit by a simple study of usage. We can consider the circumstances in which ordinary speakers would call an attitude " appropriate " or " justified ". And all that philosophy achieves in

this regard is merely to push further, and develop into, more considered and consistent forms, the implications of such ordinary ways of speaking. It can enquire whether an attitude would still seem justified, and its object appropriate, after we had reflected long and carefully on a certain matter, and looked at it from every wonted and unwonted angle. And such considaeration may lead philosophers to a different and more reasoned notion of the appropriate objects of a given attitude, than could be garnered from our unreflective ways of speaking. And these developments of ordinary usage will only seem unfeasible to victims of that strange modern confusion which thinks of attitudes exclusively as hidden processes " in our bosoms ", with nothing but an adventitious relation to appropriate outward acts and objects. How then may we apply these notions to the case of our religious attitudes ? Plainly we shall be following the natural trends of unreflective speech if we say that religious attitudes presume superiority in their objects, and such superiority, moreover, as reduces us, who feel the attitudes, to comparative nothingness. For having described a worshipful attitude as one in which we feel disposed to bend the knee before some object, to defer to it wholly, and the like, we find it natural to say that such an attitude can only be fitting where the object reverenced exceeds us very vastly, whether in power or wisdom or in other valued qualities. And while it is certainly possible to worship stocks and stones and articles of common use, one does so usually on the assumption that they aren't merely stocks and stones and ordinary articles, but the temporary seats of " indwelling presences " or centres of extraordinary powers and virtues.. And if one realises clearly that such things are merely stocks and stones or articles of common use, one can't help suffering a total vanishing or grave abatement of religious ardoar. To feel religiously is therefore to presume surpassing greatness in some object: so mach characterises the attitudes in which we bow and bend the knee, and enters into the ordinary meaning of the word " religious ". But now we advance further-in company with a large number of theologians and philosophers, who have added new touches to the portrait of deity, pleading various theoretical necessities, but really concerned to make their object worthier of our worship - and ask whether it isn't wholly anomalous to worship anything limited in any thinkable manner. For all limited superiorities are tainted with an obvious relativity, and can be dwarfed in thought by still mightier superiorities, in which process of being dwarfed they lose their claim lpon our worshipfuil attitudes. And hence we are led on irresistibly to demand that our religious object should have an unsurpassable supremacy along all avenues, that it should tower infinitely above all other objects. And not only are we led to demand for it such merely quantitative superiority: we also ask that it shouldn't stand surrounded by a world of alien objects, which owe it no allegiance, or set limits to its influence. The proper object of religious reverence must in some manner be allcomprehensive: there mustn't be anything capa-ble of existing, or of displaying any virtue, without owing all of these absolutely to this single source. All these, certainly, are difficult requirements, involving not only the obscurities and doubtful significance of the infinite, but also all the well-worn antagonisms of the immanent and transcendent, of finite sinfulness and divine perfection and preordination, which centuries of theological brooding have failed to dissipate. But we are also led on irresistibly to a yet more stringent demand, which raises difficulties which make the difficulties we have mentioned seem wholly inconsiderable: we can't help feeling that the worthy object of our worship can never be a thing that merely happens to exist, nor one on which all other objects merely happen to depend. The true object of religious reverence must not be one, merely, to which no actual independent realities stand opposed: it must be one to which such opposition is totally

intconceivable. God mustn't merely cover the territory of the actual, but also, with equal comprehensiveness, the territory of the possible. And not only must the existence of other things be unthinkable without Him, but His own non-existence must be wholly unthinkable in any circumstances. There must, in short, be no conceivable alternative to an existence properly termed " divine ": God must be wholly inescapable, as we remarked previously, whether for thought or reality. And so we are led on insensibly to the barely intelligible notion of a Being in Whom Essence and Existence lose their separateness. And all that the great mediaeval thinkers really did was to carry such a development to its logical limit. We may, however, appToach the matter from a slightly different angle. Not only is it contrary to the demands and claims inherent in religious attitudes that their object should exist " accidentally ": it is also contrary to those demands that it should possess its various excellences in some merely adventitious or contingent manner. It would be quite unsatisfactory from the religious standpoint, if an object merely happened to be wise, good, powerful and so forth, even to a superlative degree, and if other beings had, as a mere matter of fact, derived their excellences from this single source. An object of this sort would doubtless deserve respect and admiration, and other quasireligious attitudes, but it would not deserve the utter self-abandonment peculiar to the religious frame of mind. It would deserve the SovAEt'a canonically accorded to the saints, but not the Aa-peda that we properly owe to God. We might respect this object as the crowning instance of most excellent qualities, but we should incline our head before the qualities and not before the person. And wherever such qualities were manifested, though perhaps less eminently, we should always be ready to perform an essentially similar obeisance. For though such qualities might be intimately characteristic of the Supreme Being, they still wouldn't be in any sense inalienably His own. And even if other beings had, in fact, derived stich qualities from this sovereign source, they still would be their own qualities, possessed by them in their own right. And we should have no better reason to adore the author of such virtues, than sons have reason to adore superior parents, or pupils to adore superior teachers. For while these latter may deserve deep deference, the fact that we are coming to participate in their excellences renders them unworthy of our worship. Plainly a being that possesses and imparts desirable qualities-which other things might nevertheless have manifested though this source were totally absent-has all the utter inadequacy as a religious object which is expressed by saying that if would be idolatrous to worship it. Wisdom, kindness and other excellences deserve respect wherever they are manifested, but no being can appropriate them as its personal perquisites, even if it does possess them in a superlative degree. And so we are led on irresistibly, by the demands inherent in religious reverence, to hold that an adequate object of our worship must possess its various qualities in some necessary manner. These qualities must be intrinsically incapable of belonging to anything except in so far as they belong primarily to the object of our worship. Again we are led on to a queer and barely intelligible scholastic doctrine, that God isn't merely good, but is in some manner indistinguishable from His own (and anything else's) goodness. What, however, are the consequences of these requirements upon the possibility of God's existence ? Plainly they entail (for all who share a contemporary outlook) not only that there isn't a God, but that the Divine Existence is either senseless or impossible. The modern mind feels not the faintest axiomatic force in principles which trace contingent things back to some necessarily existent source, nor does it find it hard to conceive that things should display various excellent qualities without deriving them from a source which manifests them supremely. Those who believe in necessary truths which aren't

merely tautological, think that such truths merely connect the possible I have included this alternative, of which I am not fond, merely because so many modern thinkers make use of it in this sort of connexion. instances of various characteristics with each other they don't expect such truths to tell them whether there will be instances of any characteristics. This is the outcome of the whole mediveval and Kantian criticism of the Ontological Proof. And, on a yet more modern view of the matter, necessity in propositions merely reflects our use of words, the arbitrary conventions of our language. On such a view the Divine Existence could only be a necessary matter if we had made up our minds to speak theistically whatever the empirical circumstances might turn out to be. This, doubtless, would suffice for some, who speak theistically, much as Spinoza spoke monistically, merely to give expression to a particular way of looking at things, or of feeling about them. And it would also suffice for those who make use of the term " God " to co-ver whatever tendencies towards righteousness and beauty are actually included in the make-up of our world. But it wouldn't suffice for the full-blooded worshipper, who can't help finding our actual world anything but edifying, and its halfformed tendencies towards righteousness and beauty very far from adorable. The religious frame of mind seems, in fact, to be in a quandary; it seems invincibly determined both to eat its cake and have it. It desires the Divine Existence both to have that inescapable character which can, on modern views, only be found where truth reflects an arbitrary convention, and also the character of " making a real difference " which is only possible where truth doesn't have this merely linguistic basis. We may accordingly deny that modern approaches allow us to remain agnostically poised in regard to God: they force us to come down on the atheistic side. For if God is to satisfy religious claims and needs, He must be a being in every way inescapable, One Whose existence and Whose possession of certain excellences we cannot possibly conceive away. And modern views make it self-evidently absurd (if they don't make it ungrammatical) to speak of such a Being and attribute existence to Him. It was indeed an ill day for Anselm when he hit upon his famous proof. For on that day he not only laid bare something that is of the essence of an adequate religious object, but also something that entails its necessary non-existence.' The force of our argument must not, however, be exaggerated. We haven't proved that there aren't beings of all degrees of excellence and greatness, who may deserve attitudes approximating indefinitely to religious reverence. But such beings will at best be instances of valued qualities which we too may come to Or " non-significance ", if this alternative is preferred. exemplify, though in lesser degree. And not only would it be idolatrous for us to worship them, but it would also be monstrous for them to exact worship, or to care for it. The attitude of such beings to our reverence would necessarily be deprecating: they would prefer co-operative atheists to adoring zealots. And they would probably hide themselves like royal personages from the anthems of their worshippers, and perhaps the fact that there are so few positive signs of their presence is itself a feeble evidence of their real existence. But whether such beings exist or not, they are not divine, and can never satisfy the demands inherent in religious reverence. And the effect of our argument will further be to discredit generally such forms of religion as attach a uniquely sacred meaning to existent things, whether these things be men or acts or institutions or writings. But there are other frames of mind, to which we shouldn't deny the name " religious ", which acquiesce quite readily in the non-existence of their objects. (This non-existence might, in fact, be taken to be the " real meaning " of saying that religious objects and realities are " not of this world ".) In such frames of mind we give ourselves over unconditionally and gladly to the task

of indefinite approach toward a certain imaginary focus where nothing actually is, and we find this task sufficiently inspiring and satisfying without demanding (absurdly) that there should be something actual at that limit. And the atheistic religious attitude we have mentioned has also undergone reflective elaboration by such philosophers as Fichte and Erigena and Alexander. There is, then, a religious atheism which takes full stock of our arguments, and we may be glad that this is so. For since the religious spirit is one of reverence before things greater than ourselves, we should be gravely impoverished and arrested if this spirit ceased to be operative in our personal and social life. And it would certainly be better that this spirit should survive, with all its fallacious existential trimmings, than that we should cast it forth merely in order to be rid of such irrelevances.

God's Non-Existence: A Reply to Mr. Rainer and Mr. Hughes by J. N. Findlay

I am grateful to the able articles of Mr. Hughes and Mr. Rainer, which have forced me to restate and re-examine some of the points raised in my article on the non-existence of God. I anticipated the general line of their criticisms, and I entirely welcome them. For there can be, nothing really " clinching " in philosophy: " proofs " and " disproofs " hold only for those who adopt certain premises, who are willing to follow certain rules of argument, and who use their terms in certain definite ways. And every proof or disproof can be readily evaded, if one questions the truth of its premises, or the validity of its type of inference, or if one finds new senses in which its terms may be used. And it is quite proper, and one's logical duty, to evade an argument illthis manner, if it leads to preposterous consequences. And Mr. Hughes and Mr. Rainer are within their rights in thinking my conclusions preposterous: only I don't agree with them. I may say further, that I only brought in references to a " contemporary outlook ", " modern approaches "and so on, because I wanted to be frank and modest, and not because I thought such descriptions honorific. I merely wished to indicate for what classes of peison I hoped that my argument would hold water, instead of claiming (absurdly) that it would hold for all persons, whatever they might assume, and however they might choose to use their terms. I think, however, that my article will be better understood, if I mention the circumstances in which I first conceived it. Its central idea occurred to me as long ago as 1932, when I was not at all strongly influenced by " verificationism " or " logical empiricism ". The main point of my article can be simply stated as a development of the Kantian treatment of the Ontological Proof, which I was considering at the time: I am surprised, in fact, that it hasn't occurred to other persons. And it is strange that Kant, who found so many antinomies in our notion of the " World ", found none at all in our notion of God. For Kant said that it couldn't be necessary that there should ever be anything of any description whatsoever, and that, if we included " existence " in the definition of something Kant, of course, didn't think we should so include it, as existence " wasn't a predicate "-we could only say, hypothetically, that if something of a certain sort existed, then it would exist necessarily, but not, categorically, that it actually existed. And he also said that if one were willing to deny the existence of God, one couldni't be compelled to assert any property of Him, no matter how intimately such a property formed part of His " nature ". Now, Kant, of course, didn't make existence (or necessary existence) part of God's nature, but I have argued that one oughto do so, if God is to be the adequate object of our religious attitudes. So that

for all those who are willing to accept my account of an adequate religious object, and also Kant's doctrine of the hypothetical character of necessary predications, it must follow inevitably that there cannot be an adequate object for our religious attitudes. Now I admit to the full that my argument doesn't hold for those who have no desire to say that God exists in some necessary and inescapable manner. And hence Mr. Rainer is saying nothing to the point when he remarks that Broad and Ruassell (mentioned as typical modern thinkers) have not thought there was anything impossible in the existence of God. For neither Broad nor Ruissell thought of God as something whose non-existence should be inconceivable. And my argument also doesn't hold for those who regard the Ontological Proof (or some other a priori proof) as a valid argument. Nor will it hold for those who are willing to say, with Mr. Rainer, that one might come to perceive the necessity of God's existence in some higher mystical state, nor for those who say, with Mr. Hughes and St. Thomas, that God himself can perceive the " necessity "of His own " existence ", though both this " existence " and this " necessity "are something totally different from anything that we understand by these terms. I should indeed be naive if I thought Icould trap the analogical eel 2 in my dialectical net. But my argument holds for all those thinkers-who may properly be called " modern "in no narrow or " tendentious " sense-who accept Kant's view that there aren't any necessary facts of existence and who also can be persuaded to hold that a God who is " worth His salt " must either exist necessarily (in the same sense of " necessary ") or not at all. The force of my argument doesn't depend, moreover, on any recent analysis of necessity in terms of tautology: it holds on any account of the necessary that can be squared with the above conditions. My argument is, however, exposed to much more serious difficulties than those raised by Mr. Rainer and Mr. Hughes. For the " really modern philosopher " might doubt whether there was any genuine difference between my sort of atheism and the analogical theism of my opponents. And my argument has certainly suggested that there was some important difference btween the two positions. For my opponents would admit, as I do, that one can never hope to have the Divine " fully before one ", so as to be able to say " Lo here! " of it, in the same way that one says this of one's friend Jones or the Eiffel Tower. They would say with me, that one can't ever hope to meet with more than " expressions ' " approximations or " analogies " of the Divine, that it is in the nature of the Divine to Perhaps he does, however. See Kritik, p. 676. This term isn't used disrespectfully: I approve of eels. outsoar and elude one. And I, for my part, sh-ould be willing to accord to my focus imaginarius that same attitude of -unquestioning reverence, that my critics accord to their existent God: it is, in fact, because I think so highly of certain ideals, that I also think it unworthy to identify them with anything existent. And there is nothing absurd in having any number of emotional or other attitudes to objects that one thinks of as imaginary. The "god" of the.atheist will indeed be slightly different from the God of the theist-Mr. Rainer has taught me this-but He will only be so by an addition of "brackets ". And the atheist might also admit the existence of something that I should describe (with great trepidation) as a " god-ward trend " in things: certainly there are some facts in our experience which are (one might say) as if there were a God. And when theists say that their God exists in some sense quite different from created objects, there seems but a hairsbreadth between them and such atheists as place their ideal, with Plato and Plotinus, In reply to such criticisms (if anyone were to raise them) I could give no better reason for preferring my atheistic formulations, than than that they suited me from amoral and religious standpoint. For I am by temperament a Protestant, and I tend towards atheism -as the purest form of Protestantism. By " Protestantism " I

mean the conviction-resting, asit seems to me, on elementary truisms -that it isn't essential in order to be a sound or " saved " person, that one should pay deference to institutions, persons, books, ceremonies and so forth, or do anything more than develop those qualities in which being a sound or " saved " person consists. (Not that I think meanly of ceremonies, books, persons and so forth, if not regarded as essential.) Now I don't doubt that theism can be so held as not to involve any idolatrous implications, but I think it hard to be a theist without falling into idolatry, with all its attendant evils of intolerance and persecution. And this is particularly the case in a religion like Christianity where the Divine is identified with a particular historical person, who existed in no analogical manner, but precisely as you and I do. I am not, however, a religious genius, nor do I know how to replace the existential formulations of our present religion, with non-existential formulations that would prove equally effective, whether in stimulating endeavor or in damming up the tide of cruelty and injustice. For these reasons I am not at all keen to shake faiths or overturn altars (if- indeed I were able to do so).

PROVING THE NON-EXISTENCE OF GOD by John L. Pollock

This article begins by giving a brief account of why the Ontological Argument for the existence of God is invalid. Then it goes on to show that the invalidity of this argument can be used to prove that God cannot exist. In many religions, including I believe the Christian religion, the principal deity is conceived as existing necessarily. In other words, in such religions, the concept of God is such that, if there is such a being, then He exists necessarily. Symbolizing 'God' by 'g', 'x exists' by 'Ex', and the modal operator of logical necessity by ' D'»1 we can say that the concept of God which we are considering is such that (Eg => ••£#). I now propose to show that, simply as a matter of logic, such a being cannot exist. In order to prove the non-existence of God, it is convenient to begin by considering one of the most interesting of the arguments that purport to prove that God does exist — the Ontological Argument. One of the standard versions of the Ontological Argument begins by defining God to be the being more perfect than whom none can be conceived. A being that exists is more perfect than one that does not exist. Hence, if God did not exist we could conceive of a greater being — namely, one that exists. Therefore it follows from the definition of 'God' that He exists. We can symbolize the steps of this argument as follows:

(1) g = Di(the * such that Px) ;

(2) therefore, Pg;

(3) D(*) (Px =» Ex);

(4) therefore, U(Pg = Eg);

(5) therefore, Eg.

Here we have taken 'Px' to be the predicate of absolute perfection. The most common way of attacking this argument is due to Hume and Kant, and consists in attacking (3) by denying that existence is a perfection. This is often put in a misleading way by saying that existence is not a predicate, but the arguments adduced do not support that conclusion. In his recent article on the Ontological Argument, Norman Malcolm claims to find a second version of the Ontological

Argument in Anselm's writings, in which 'Ex' is replaced throughout by ' D-E*'. It is then argued that although existence may not be a perfection, necessary existence is a perfection, and the conclusion of the argument is that God exists necessarily:

(1) g = Di(the * such that Px) ;

(2) therefore, Pg;

(3') D M (Px => DEx);

(4') therefore, O(Pg => Œg);

(5') therefore, QEg.

Unfortunately, this argument (and also the first argument) relies upon a simple logical fallacy. (2) does not follow from (1). In general, if we define 'a' by stipulating that a = m (the x such that Ax), we cannot automatically conclude that Aa. To see this, suppose we let 'Ax' be 'Bx & ~Bx'. Then we would have, purely by definition, 'Ba & ~Ba\ In other words, we would have a contradiction following logically from a definition, in which case the contradiction would be logically true. But of course, that is absurd. What we can prove is that if there is a unique thing satisfying 'Ax', then 'Aa' will be true. But to say that there is a unique thing satisfying 'Ax' is just to say that a exists, i.e. that Ea. If there isn't anything that can properly be called 'the * such that Ax', then clearly we can't conclude anything about a. In general, the strongest conclusion we can get from the definition

'a = m (the x such that Ax)' is 'O(Ea => Aa)'.

Now let us apply these considerations to the Ontological Argument.

The corrected argument now becomes:

(1) g = Df

(the x such that Px) ;

(2') therefore, Uißg => Pg);

(3') DM (*»*=> DEx);

(4') therefore, a{Pg => QEg);

(5') therefore, U(Eg => UEg).

In other words, if God exists, then He must exist necessarily. But it was just His existence that was in question in the first place, so it seems that this version does not succeed in establishing that God exists any more than the first version. Note that this argument can be repeated no matter what we put in for 'Px'. We can never get more than' D(Eg =» HEg)' for a conclusion. But next note that, as ' D(Eg => Pg)' is the strongest conclusion we can obtain from the definition g = D1 (the * such that Px)', if there were any formally valid argument by which we could obtain 'Eg' from the definition of 'g\ then an argument of the form of the Ontological Argument whereby we obtain it from ' H(Eg => Pg)', together with a premise of the form *D(#) (Px => DEx)', or more generally,

of the form 'D(tf) {P* => #*)'» which specifies what the logical nature of 'P' is, would have to be valid. Furthermore, assuming an essentially Fregean theory of logical necessity, 'Eg' is entailed by the definition 'g = Df (the * such that Px) ' if and only if, by specifying the logical nature of 'P' through the addition of premises of the form ' Q(*) (P*=> $*)', we can obtain a formally valid argument having 'Eg' as the conclusion. As we have just seen, this cannot be done, and so it follows that the definition of 'g' does not entail 'Eg'. On the other hand, we have seen that the definition of 'g' does entail 'n(Eg => DEg)'. If we write 'P ->- ß,' for 'P entails Q, then these conclusions can be symbolized as:

(6) (g = D1 the * such that Px) -* n(Eg ^ aEg) ;

(7) ~[(g = D| the * such that Px) -* Eg].

The most common analysis of logical necessity is to say that a proposition is necessarily true if and only if it is true by virtue of the meaning of its constituent terms. This means that the proposition that God exists is necessarily true just in case the meaning of 'God' requires that He exist, i.e. just in the case the definition of 'God' entails that He exists :

(8) \jEg ss [{g = Dt

the x such that Px) -* Eg].

But then from (7) we can conclude that

(9)

Next recall that our concept of God is such that if He exists, then He must exist necessarily (by (6)), i.e. Eg ^ OEg. But then, simply by modus tollens from (9), ~£g , i.e. God does not exist. Furthermore, this is a conclusion we have proven by logical means, so it is not just true, but necessarily true, i.e. U^Eg. Thus, it is necessarily true that God does not exist. The existence of God is a logical impossibility.

One possible reply to this argument is that when people have spoken of God's necessary existence, they have not meant logical necessity. This may well be true, in which case we are talking about two different kinds of supreme being, only one kind of which I have attempted to show cannot exist. However, if by 'necessity' these people do not mean logical necessity, then I am afraid that I do not understand what they do mean. They clearly cannot mean physical necessity. It seems to me that the burden of proof is on them to explain a bit more clearly just what sort of necessity they have in mind.

St. Paul: Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin and Saddam Hussein--Ministers of God by Daniel G. Jennings

According to St. Paul, Saddam Hussein and North Korean dictator Kim Jong Il are not evil tyrants oppressing innocent people, rather they are God's ministers doing God's work in the world.

Don't believe me? Check out Paul's Epistle to the Romans. According to the New King James version of the Bible, Romans 13.1 states: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.

For there is no authority except from God." In Romans 13.6, Paul says of government authorities "... for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing."

What this means is that all government leaders--including Saddam Hussein, Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin--were put into power by God and whatever policies they carried out were the will of God. The Holocaust, the Gulags, the Purge Trials and Apartheid were all the will of God. The Nazis who ran the gas chambers and the Japanese soldiers who threw Chinese babies on bayonets during World War II were doing God's work in the world.

If this horrendous idea were not bad enough, Paul states in Romans 13.2: "Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves."

In other words it is a sin to oppose a government policy no matter how evil, corrupt or oppressive. Thus, the Founding Fathers were sinners for opposing British rule of North America, Gandhi was a sinner for opposing British rule in India, Lech Walensa was a sinner for opposing Communist rule of Poland. On the other hand, Saddam Hussein was not sinning when he used nerve gas on innocent Kurd civilians; he was doing God's work.

Paul also gives good Christians a pretext for not doing anything to help the victims of tyranny. In Romans 13:4, Saint Paul describes a government leader as "an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." Therefore, the victim of tyranny must be a sinner who did something wrong and is merely being punished for it by God. I wonder what sins were committed by the Jewish children who perished in the gas chambers and the Chinese babies who were pitched on bayonets.

St. Paul then was perhaps one of the greatest enemies the cause of freedom ever had. He told Christians that they had a moral duty to bow down to tyrants and to accept tyranny as the natural order ordained by God.

God and Moral Autonomy (1997) by James Rachels

Kneeling down or grovelling on the ground, even to express your reverence for heavenly things, is contrary to human dignity.

-- Kant

God, if he exists, is worthy of worship. Any being who is not worthy of worship cannot be God, just as any being who is not omnipotent or perfectly good cannot be God.[1] This is reflected in the attitudes of religious believers who recognize that whatever else God may be, he is a being before whom we should bow down. Moreover, he is unique in this; to worship anyone or anything else is blasphemy But can such a being exist? In what follows I will present an argument against the existence of God that is based on the conception of God as a fitting object of worship. The argument is that God cannot exist, because there could not be a being toward whom we should adopt such an attitude.

Worship

The concept of worship has received surprisingly little attention from philosophers of religion. When it has been treated, the usual approach is by way of referring to God's awesomeness or mysteriousness: to worship is to "bow down in silent awe" when confronted with a being that is "terrifyingly mysterious."[2] But neither of these notions is of much help in understanding worship. Awe is certainly not the same thing as worship; one can be awed by a performance of King Lear, or by witnessing an eclipse of the sun or an earthquake, or by meeting one's favorite film star, without worshiping any of these things. And a great many things are both terrifying and mysterious that we have not the slightest inclination to worship--the Black Death probably fits that description for many people. So we need an account of worship that does not rely on such notions as awesomeness and mysteriousness.

Consider McBlank, who worked against America's entry into the Second World War, refused induction into the army, and went to jail. He was active in the "ban the bomb" movements of the 1950s; he made speeches, wrote pamphlets, led demonstrations, and went back to jail. He opposed the war in Vietnam; and in old age he angrily denounced the short-lived Gulf War. In all of this McBlank acted out of principle. He thinks that all war is evil and that no war is ever justified.

We might note three features of McBlank's pacifist commitment. (1) He recognizes that certain facts are the case. History is full of wars; war causes the massive destruction of life and property; in war people suffer on a scale hardly matched in any other way; the large nations now have weapons that, if used, could virtually wipe out the human race; and so on. These are just facts that any normally informed person will admit without argument. (2) But of course they are not merely facts that people recognize to be the case in some indifferent manner. They are facts that have special importance to human beings. They form an ominous and threatening backdrop to people's lives--even though for most people they are a backdrop only. But not so for McBlank. He sees the accumulation of these facts as having radical implications for his conduct; he behaves in a very different way from the way he would behave were it not for these facts. His whole style of life is different; his conduct is altered, not just in its details, but in its pattern. (3) Not only is his overt behavior affected; so are his ways of thinking about the world and his place in it. His self-image is different. He sees himself as a member of a race with an insane history of self-destruction, and his self-image becomes that of an active opponent of the forces that lead to this self-destruction. He is an opponent of militarism just as he is a father or a musician. When the existentialists said that we "create ourselves" by our choices, they may have had something like this in mind.

The worshiper has a set of beliefs about God that function in the same way as McBlank's beliefs about war. First, the worshiper believes that certain sorts of things are the case: for example, that the world was created by an all-powerful, all-wise being who knows our every thought and action; that this being cares for us and regards us as his children; that we are made by him in order to return his love and live in accordance with his laws, and that if we do not live in a way pleasing to him, we may be punished. (I use these beliefs as my example. But I do not mean that these particular beliefs are accepted, in just this form, by all religious people. They are, however, the sorts of beliefs that are required for the business of worshiping God to make sense.)

Second, like the facts about warfare, these are not facts that one notes with an air of indifference. They have important implications for one's conduct. An effort must be made to discover God's will

both for people generally and for oneself in particular; and to this end, the believer consults the church authorities and the theologians, reads the scripture, and prays. The degree to which this will alter his behavior will depend, of course, on exactly what he decides God would have him do and on the extent to which his behavior would have followed the prescribed pattern in any case.

Finally, the believer's recognition of these facts will influence his self-image and his way of thinking about the world and his place in it. The world will be regarded as having been made for the fulfillment of divine purposes; the hardships that befall men will be regarded either as "tests" in some sense or as punishments for sin; and most important, the believer will think of himself as a child of God and of his conduct as reflecting either honor or dishonor upon his Heavenly Father.

Wittgenstein's View

What will be most controversial in what I have said so far (to some philosophers, though perhaps not to most religious believers) is the treatment of claims such as "God regards us as his children" as in some sense factual. Wittgenstein is reported to have thought this a misunderstanding of religious belief, and others have followed him in this.[3] Religious utterances, it is said, do not report putative facts. Instead, we should understand such utterances as revealing the speaker's form of life. To have a form of life is to accept a language game; the religious believer accepts a language game in which there is talk of God, Creation, Heaven and Hell, a Last Judgment, and so forth, which the skeptic does not accept. Such language games can be understood only in their own terms; we must not try to assimilate them to other sorts of games. To see how this particular game works, we need only to examine the way the language of religion is used by actual believers; in its proper habitat the language game will be "in order" as it stands. We find that the religious believer uses such utterances for a number of purposes--for example, to express reasons for action, to show the significance that she attaches to various things, to express her attitudes, and so on--but not to state facts in the ordinary sense. So when the believer makes a typically religious assertion and the nonbeliever denies the same, they are not contradicting one another; rather, the nonbeliever is simply refusing to play the believer's (very serious) game. Wittgenstein (as recorded by his pupils) said:

Suppose that someone believed in the Last Judgement, and I don't, does this mean that I believe the opposite to him, just that there won't be such a thing? I would say: 'not at all, or not always.'

Suppose I say that the body will rot, and another says 'No. Particles will rejoin in a thousand years, and there will be a Resurrection of you.'

If some said: Wittgenstein, do you believe in this?' I'd say: 'No." Do you contradict the man?' I'd say: 'No.'[4]

Wittgenstein goes on to say that the difference between the believer and the skeptic is not that one holds something to be true that the other thinks false but that the believer takes certain things as "guidance for life" that the skeptic does not--for example, that there will be a Last Judgment. He illustrates this by reference to a person who "thinks of retribution" when he plans his conduct or assesses his condition:

Suppose you had two people, and one of them, when he had to decide which course to take, thought of retribution, and the other did not. One person might, for instance, be inclined to take everything that happened to him as a reward or punishment, and another person doesn't think of this at all.

If he is ill, he may think: 'What have I done to deserve this?' This is one way of thinking of retribution. Another way is, he thinks in a general way whenever he is ashamed of himself: 'This will be punished.'

Take two people, one of whom talks of his behavior and of what happens to him in terms of retribution, the other does not. These people think entirely differently. Yet, so far, you can't say they believe different things.

Suppose someone is ill and he says: 'This is punishment,' and I say: 'If I'm ill, I don't think of punishment at all.' If you say: 'Do you believe the opposite?'-you can call it believing the opposite, but it is entirely different from what we would normally call believing the opposite.

I think differently, in a different way. I say different things to myself. I have different pictures.[5]

But it is not at all clear that this account is true to the intentions of those who engage in religious discourse. If a believer (at least, the great majority of those whom I have known or read about) says that there will be a Last Judgment and a skeptic says that there will not, the believer certainly will think that he has been contradicted. Of course, the skeptic might not think of denying such a thing except for the fact that the believer asserts it; and in this trivial sense, the skeptic might "think differently"--but that is beside the point. Moreover, former believers who become skeptics frequently do so because they come to believe that religious assertions are false; then they consider themselves to be denying exactly what they previously asserted.

Moreover, a belief does not lose its ordinary factual import simply because it occupies a central place in one's way of life. McBlank takes the facts about war as guidance for life in a perfectly straightforward sense; but they remain facts. I take it that just as the man in Wittgenstein's example thinks of retribution often, McBlank thinks of war often. So, we do not need to give religious utterances any peculiar interpretation in order to explain their importance for one's way of life.

Finally, we do not need a view of religious belief that is deep and difficult. If the impact of religious belief on conduct and thinking can be explained by appeal to nothing more mysterious than putative facts and their impact on conduct and thinking, then the need for a more obscure theory is obviated. And if people believe that, as a matter of fact, their actions are subject to review by a just God who will mete out rewards and punishments on a day of final reckoning, that will explain very nicely why they think of retribution when they reflect on their conduct.

The Point of the Ritual

Worship is something that is done; but it is not clear just what is done when one worships. Other actions, such as throwing a ball or insulting one's neighbor, seem transparent enough; but not so with worship. When we celebrate Mass in the Roman Catholic Church, for example, what are we doing (apart from eating a wafer and drinking wine)? Or when we sing hymns in a Protestant church, what are we doing (other than merely singing songs)? What is it that makes these acts of

worship? One obvious point is that these actions, and others like them, are ritualistic in character; so before we can make any progress in understanding worship, perhaps it will help to ask about the nature of ritual.

First we need to distinguish the ceremonial form of a ritual from what is supposed to be accomplished by it. Consider, for example, the ritual of investiture for an English prince. The prince kneels; the queen (or king) places a crown on his head; and he takes an oath: "I do become your liege man of life and limb and of earthly worship, and faith and trust I will bear unto thee to live and die against all manner of folks." By this ceremony the prince is elevated to his new station, and by this oath he acknowledges the commitments that, as prince, he will owe the queen. In one sense, the ceremonial form of the ritual is unimportant; it is possible that some other procedure might have been laid down, without the point of the ritual being affected in any way. Rather than placing a crown on his head, the queen might break an egg into his palm (that could symbolize all sorts of things). Once this was established as the procedure, it would do as well as the other. It would still be the ritual of investiture, so long as it was understood that by the ceremony a prince is created. The performance of a ritual, then, is in certain respects like the use of language. In speaking, sounds are uttered, and, thanks to the conventions of the language, something is said, or affirmed, or done; and in a ritual performance, a ceremony is enacted, and, thanks to the conventions associated with the ceremony, something is done, or affirmed, or celebrated.

How are we to explain the point of the ritual of investiture? We might explain that certain parts of the ritual symbolize specific things; for example, that the prince's kneeling before the queen symbolizes his subordination to her (it is not merely to make it easier for her to place the crown on his head). But it is essential that in explaining the point of the ritual as a whole, we include that a prince is being created, that he is henceforth to have certain rights in virtue of having been made a prince, and that he is to have certain duties that he is now acknowledging, among which are complete loyalty and faithfulness to the queen, and so on. If the listener already knows about the complex relations between queens, princes, and subjects, then all we need to say is that a prince is being installed in office; but if he is unfamiliar with this social system, we must tell him a great deal if he is to understand what is going on.

So, once we understand the social system in which there are queens, princes, and subjects, and therefore understand the role assigned to each within that system, we can sum up what is happening in the ritual of investiture in this way: someone is being made a prince, and he is accepting that role with all that it involves. Similar explanations could be given for other rituals, such as the marriage ceremony: two people are being made husband and wife, and they are accepting those roles with all that they involve.

The question to be asked about the ritual of worship is what analogous explanation can be given of it. The ceremonial form of the ritual may vary according to the customs of the religious community; it may involve singing, drinking wine, counting beads, sitting with a solemn expression on one's face, dancing, making a sacrifice, or what have you. But what is the point of it?

As we have already observed, the worshiper thinks of himself as inhabiting a world created by an infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, perfectly good God; and it is a world in which he, along with other people, occupies a special place in virtue of God's intentions. This gives him a certain role to play: the role of a "child of God." In worshiping God, one is acknowledging and accepting this role, and that is the point of the ritual of worship. just as the ritual of investiture derives its significance from its place within the social system of queens, princes, and subjects, the ritual of worship gets its significance from an assumed system of relationships between God and human beings. In the ceremony of investiture, the prince assumes a role with respect to the queen and the citizenry. In marriage, two people assume roles with respect to one another. And in worship, a person accepts and affirms his role with respect to God.

Worship presumes the superior status of the one worshiped. This is reflected in the logical point that there can be no such things as mutual or reciprocal worship, unless one or the other of the parties is mistaken as to his own status. We can very well comprehend people loving one another or respecting one another, but not (unless they are misguided) worshiping one another. This is because the worshiper necessarily assumes his own inferiority; and since inferiority is an asymmetrical relation, so is worship. (The nature of the "superiority" and "inferiority" involved here is of course problematic; but in the account I am presenting, it may be understood on the model of superior and inferior positions within a social system.) This is also why humility is necessary on the part of the worshiper. The role to which he commits himself is that of the humble servant, "not worthy to touch the hem of his garment." Compared to God's gloriousness, "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."[6] So in committing oneself to this role, one is acknowledging God's greatness and one's own relative worthlessness. This humble attitude is not a mere embellishment of the ritual: on the contrary, worship, unlike love or respect, requires humility. Pride is a sin, and pride before God is incompatible with worshiping him.

The function of worship as "glorifying" or "praising" God, which is often taken to be primary, may be regarded as derivative from the more fundamental nature of worship as commitment to the role of God's child. "Praising" God is giving him the honor and respect due to one in his position of eminence, just as one shows respect and honor in giving fealty to a king.

In short, the worshiper is in this position: He believes that there is a being, God, who is the perfectly good, perfectly powerful, perfectly wise Creator of the universe; and he views himself as the child of God, made for God's purposes and responsible to God for his conduct. And the ritual of worship, which may have any number of ceremonial forms according to the customs of the religious community, has as its point the acceptance of, and commitment to, this role as God's child, with all that this involves. If this account is accepted, then there is no mystery as to the relation between the act of worship and the worshiper's other activity. Worship will be regarded not as an isolated act taking place on Sunday morning, with no necessary connection to one's behavior the rest of the week, but as a ritualistic expression of, and commitment to, a role that dominates one's whole way of life.

Acting Consistently with One's Role as God's Child

An important feature of roles is that they can be violated: we can act and think consistently with a role, or we can act and think inconsistently with it. The prince can, for example, act inconsistently with his role as prince by giving greater importance to his own interests and welfare than to the queen's; in this case, he is no longer her liege man. And a father who does not attend to the welfare of his children is not acting consistently with his role as a father, and so on. What would count as violating the role to which one is pledged in virtue of worshiping God?

In Genesis two familiar stories, both concerning Abraham, are relevant. The first is the story of the near sacrifice of Isaac. We are told that Abraham was "tempted" by God, who commanded him to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice. Abraham obeyed--he prepared an altar, bound Isaac to it, and was about to kill him until God intervened at the last moment, saying, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. 22:12). So Abraham passed the test. But how could he have failed? What was his temptation? Obviously, his temptation was to disobey God; God had ordered him to do some thing contrary both to his wishes and to his sense of what would other wise have been right. He could have defied God, but he did not--he subordinated himself, his own desires and judgments, to God's command, even when the temptation to do otherwise was strongest.

It is interesting that Abraham's record in this respect was not perfect. We also have the story of him bargaining with God over the conditions for saving Sodom and Gomorrah from destruction. God had said that he would destroy those cities because they were so wicked; but Abraham gets God to agree that if fifty righteous men can be found there, the cities will be spared. Then he persuades God to lower the number to forty-five, then forty, then thirty, then twenty, and finally ten. Here we have a different Abraham, not servile and obedient, but willing to challenge God and bargain with him. However, even as he bargains with God, Abraham realizes that there is something radically inappropriate about it: he says, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.... Oh let not the Lord be angry" (Gen. 18:27, 30).

The fact is that Abraham could not, consistent with his role as God's subject, set his own judgment and will against God's. The author of Genesis was certainly right about this. We cannot recognize any being as God and at the same time set ourselves against him. The point is not merely that it would be imprudent to defy God, since we certainly can't get away with it. Rather, there is a stronger, logical point involved--namely, that if we recognize any being as God, then we are committed, in virtue of that recognition, to obeying him.

To see why this is so, we must first notice that "God" is not a proper name like "Richard Nixon" but a title like "president of the United States" or "king."[8] Thus, "Jehovah is God" is a nontautological statement in which the title "God" is assigned to Jehovah, a particular being, just as "Richard Nixon is president of the United States" assigns the title "president of the United States" to a particular man. This permits us to understand how statements like "God is perfectly wise" can be logical truths, which is problematic if "God" is regarded as a proper name. Although it is not a logical truth that any particular being is perfectly wise, it nevertheless is a logical truth that if any being is God (that is, if any being properly holds that title), then that being is perfectly wise. This is exactly analogous to saying that although it is not a logical truth that Richard Nixon

has the authority to veto congressional legislation, nevertheless it is a logical truth that if Richard Nixon is president of the United States, then he has that authority.

To bear the title "God," then, a being must have certain qualifications: he must be all-powerful and perfectly good in addition to being perfectly wise. And in the same vein, to apply the title "God" to a being is to recognize him as one to be obeyed. The same is true, to a lesser extent, of "king"; to recognize anyone as king is to acknowledge that he occupies a place of authority and has a claim on one's allegiance as his subject. And to recognize any being as God is to acknowledge that he has unlimited authority and an unlimited claim on one's allegiance. Thus, we might regard Abraham's reluctance to defy Jehovah as grounded not only in his fear of Jehovah's wrath but as a logical consequence of his acceptance of Jehovah as God. Albert Camus was right to think that "from the moment that man submits God to moral judgment, he kills Him his own heart."[9] What a man can "kill" by defying or even questioning God is not the being that (supposedly) is God but his own conception of that being as God. That God is not to be judged, challenged, defied, or disobeyed is at bottom a truth of logic. To do any of these things is incompatible with taking him as one to be worshiped.

As a sidelight, this suggestion might also provide some help with the old problem of how we could, even in principle, verify God's existence. Skeptics have argued that even though we might be able to confirm the existence of an all-powerful cosmic superbeing, we still wouldn't know what it means to verify that this being is divine. And this, it is said, casts doubt on whether the notion of divinity and related notions such as sacred," "holy," and "God" are intelligible.[10] Perhaps this is because in designating a being as God, we are not only describing him as having certain properties (such as omnipotence), but we are also ascribing to him a certain place in our devotions and taking him as one to be obeyed, worshiped, and praised. If this is part of the logic of "God," we shouldn't be surprised if God's existence, insofar as that includes the existence of divinity, is not empirically confirmable. But once the reason for this is understood, it no longer seems such a serious matter.

The Moral Autonomy Argument

So the idea that any being could be worthy of worship is much more problematic than we might have at first imagined. In saying that a being is worthy of worship, we would be recognizing him as having an unqualified claim on our obedience. The question, then, is whether there could be such an unqualified claim. It should be noted that the description of a being as all-powerful, all-wise, and so on would not automatically settle the issue; for even while admitting the existence of such an awesome being, we might still question whether we should recognize him as having an unlimited claim on our obedience.

There is a long tradition in moral philosophy, from Plato to Kant, according to which such a recognition could never be made by a moral agent. According to this tradition, to be a moral agent is to be autonomous, or self-directed. Unlike the precepts of law or social custom, moral precepts are imposed by the agent upon himself, and the penalty for their violation is, in Kant's words, "self-contempt and inner abhorrence." The virtuous person is therefore identified with the person of integrity, the person who acts according to precepts that she can, on reflection, conscientiously approve in her own heart.

On this view, to deliver oneself over to a moral authority for directions about what to do is simply incompatible with being a moral agent. To say "I will follow so-and-so's directions no matter what they are and no matter what my own conscience would otherwise direct me to do" is to opt out of moral thinking altogether; it is to abandon one's role as a moral agent. And it does not matter whether "so-and-so" is the law, the customs of one's society, or Jehovah. This does not, of course, preclude one from seeking advice on moral matters and even on occasion following that advice blindly, trusting in the good judgment, of the adviser. But this is justified by the details of the particular case--for example, that you cannot form any reasonable judgment of your own because of ignorance or inexperience or lack of time. What is precluded is that a person should, while in possession of his wits, adopt this style of decision making (or perhaps we should say this style of abdicating decision making) as a general strategy of living, or abandon his own best judgment when he can form a judgment of which he is reasonably confident.

We have, then, a conflict between the role of worshiper, which by its very nature commits one to total subservience to God, and the role of moral agent, which necessarily involves autonomous decision making. The role of worshiper takes precedence over every other role the worshiper has; when there is any conflict, the worshiper's commitment to God has priority over everything. But the first commitment of a moral agent is to do what in his own heart he thinks is right. Thus the following argument might be constructed:

1. If any being is God, he must be a fitting object of worship.

2. No being could possibly be a fitting object of worship, since worship requires the abandonment of one's role as an autonomous moral agent.

3. Therefore, there cannot be any being who is God.

Objections and Replies

The concept of moral agency underlying this argument is controversial, and although I think it is sound, I cannot give it here the detailed treatment that it requires. Instead, I will conclude by considering some of the most obvious objections to the argument.

(1) What if God lets us go our own way and issues no commands other than that we should live according to our own consciences? In that case there would be no incompatibility between our commitment to God and our commitments as moral agents, since God would leave us free to direct our own lives. The fact that this supposition is contrary to major religious traditions (such as the Christian tradition) doesn't matter, since these traditions could be mistaken. The answer is that this is a mere contingency, and that even if God did not require obedience to detailed commands, the worshiper would still be committed to the abandonment of his role as a moral agent if God required it.

(2) God is perfectly good; it follows that he would never require us to do anything except what is right. Therefore, in obeying God, we would only be doing what we should do in any case. So there is no incompatibility between obeying him and carrying out our moral responsibilities. Our responsibility as moral agents is to do right, and God's commands are right, so that's that. This objection rests on a misunderstanding of the idea that (necessarily) God is perfectly good. This can

be intelligibly asserted only because of the principle that no being who is not perfectly good may bear the title "God." The catch is that we cannot determine whether some being is God without first checking on whether he is perfectly good;[12] and we cannot decide whether he is perfectly good without knowing (among other things) whether his commands to us are right. Thus our own judgment that some actions are right and others wrong is logically prior to our recognition of any being as God. The upshot is that we cannot justify the suspension of our own judgment on the grounds that we are deferring to God's command; for if, by our own best judgment, the command is wrong, this gives us good reason to withhold the title "God" from the commander.

(3) People are sinful; their very consciences are corrupt and unreliable guides. What is taken for conscientiousness is nothing more than self-aggrandizement and arrogance. Therefore, we cannot trust our own judgment; we must trust God and do what he wills. Only then can we be assured of doing what is right.

This is a view that has always had its advocates among theologians. But this Augustinian view suffers from a fundamental inconsistency. It is said that we cannot know for ourselves what is right and what is wrong, because our judgment is corrupt. But how do we know that our judgment is corrupt? Presumably, in order to know that, we would have to know (a) that some actions are morally required of us, and (b) that our own judgment does not reveal that these actions are required. However, (a) is just the sort of thing that we cannot know, according to this view. Now, it may be suggested that while we cannot know (a) by our own judgment, we can know it as a result of God's revelation. But even setting aside the practical difficulties of distinguishing genuine from bogus revelation (a generous concessim), there is still this problem: if we learn that God (some being we take to be God) requires us to do a certain action and we conclude on this account that the action is morally right, then we have still made at least one moral judgment of our own, namely, that whatever this being requires is morally right. Therefore, it is impossible to maintain the view that we have moral knowledge and that all of it comes from God's revelation.

(4) Some philosophers have held that the voice of individual conscience is the voice of God speaking to the individual, whether the individual realizes it or not and whether he is a believer or not. This would resolve the conflict, because in following one's conscience, one would at the same time be discharging one's obligation as a worshiper to obey God. However, this maneuver is unsatisfying because if it were taken seriously, it would lead to the conclusion that in speaking to us through our "consciences," God is merely tricking us, for he is giving us the illusion of self-governance while all the time he is manipulating our thoughts from without. Moreover, in acting from conscience, we are acting under the view that our actions are right and not merely that they are decreed by a higher power. Socrates' argument in the Euthyphro can be adapted to this point. If in speaking to us through the voice of conscience, God is informing us of what is right, then there is no reason to think that we could not discover this for ourselves--the notion of "God informing us" is eliminable. On the other hand, if God is only giving us arbitrary commands, which cannot be thought of as right independent of his promulgating them, then the whole idea of conscience, as it is normally understood, is a sham.

(5) Finally, it might be objected that the question of whether any being is worthy of worship is different from the question of whether we should worship him. In general, that X is worthy of our

doing Y with respect to X does not entail that we should do Y with respect to X. Mrs. Brown, being a fine woman, may be worthy of a marriage proposal, but we ought not to propose to her, since she is already married. Or, Seaman Jones may be worthy of a medal for heroism, but still there could be reasons why we should not award it. Similarly, it may be that there is a being who is worthy of worship and yet we should not worship him since it would interfere with our lives as moral agents. Thus God, who is worthy of worship, may exist; and we should love, respect, and honor him, but not worship him in the full sense of the word. If this is correct, then the Moral Autonomy Argument is fallacious.

But this objection will not work because of a disanalogy between the cases of proposing marriage and awarding the medal, on the one hand, and the case of worship on the other. It may be that Mrs. Brown is worthy of a proposal, yet there are circumstances in which it would be wrong to propose to her. However, these circumstances are contrasted with others in which it would be perfectly all right. The same goes for Seaman Jones's medal: there are some circumstances in which awarding it would be proper. But in the case of worship--if the foregoing arguments have been sound--there are no circumstances under which anyone should worship God. And if one should never worship, then the concept of a fitting object of worship is empty.

The Moral Autonomy Argument will probably not persuade anyone to abandon belief in God-arguments rarely do--and there are certainly many more points that need to be worked out before it can be known whether this argument is even viable. Perhaps it isn't. Yet it does raise an issue that is clear enough. Theologians are already accustomed to speaking of theistic belief and commitment as taking the believer "beyond morality." The question is whether this should not be regarded as a severe embarrassment.

Percy Shelley – A Refutacion of Deism

Design must be proved before a designer can be inferred. The matter in controversy is the existence of design in the Universe, and it is not permitted to assume the contested premises and thence infer the matter in dispute. Insidiously to employ the words contrivance, design, and adaptation before these circumstances are made apparent in the Universe, thence justly inferring a contriver, is a popular sophism against which it behoves us to be watchful.

To assert that motion is an attribute of mind, that matter is inert, that every combination is the result of intelligence is also an assumption of the matter in dispute.

Why do we admit design in any machine of human contrivance? Simply because innumerable instances of machines having been contrived by human art are present to our mind, because we are acquainted with persons who could construct such machines; but if, having no previous knowledge of any artificial contrivance, we had accidentally found a watch upon the ground, we should have been justified in concluding that it was a thing of Nature, that it was a combination of matter with whose cause we were unacquainted, and that any attempt to account for the origin of its existence would be equally presumptuous and unsatisfactory.

The analogy which you attempt to establish between the contrivances of human art, and the various existences of the Universe, is inadmissible. We attribute these effects to human intelligence,

because we know beforehand that human intelligence is capable of producing them. Take away this knowledge, and the grounds of our reasoning will be destroyed. Our entire ignorance, therefore, of the Divine Nature leaves this analogy defective in its most essential point of comparison.

What consideration remains to be urged in support of the creation of the Universe by a supreme Being? Its admirable fitness for the production of certain effects, that wonderful consent of all its parts, that universal harmony by whose changeless laws innumerable systems of worlds perform their stated revolutions, and the blood is driven through the veins of the minutest animalcule that sports in the corruption of an insect's lymph: on this account did the Universe require an intelligent Creator, because it exists producing invariable effects, and inasmuch as it is admirably organised for the production of these effects, so the more did it require a creative intelligence.

Thus have we arrived at the substance of your assertion, "That whatever exists, producing certain effects, stands in need of a Creator, and the more conspicuous is its fitness for the production of these effects, the more certain will be our conclusion that it would not have existed from eternity, but must have derived its origin from an intelligent creator."

In what respect then do these arguments apply to the Universe, and not apply to God? From the fitness of the Universe to its end you infer the necessity of an intelligent Creator. But if the fitness of the Universe, to produce certain effects, be thus conspicuous and evident, how much more exquisite fitness to his end must exist in the Author of this Universe? If we find great difficulty from its admirable arrangement in conceiving that the Universe has existed from all eternity, and to resolve this difficulty suppose a Creator, how much more clearly must we perceive the necessity of this very Creator's creation whose perfections comprehend an arrangement far more accurate and just.

The belief of an infinity of creative and created Gods, each more eminently requiring an intelligent author of his being than the foregoing, is a direct consequence of the premises which you have stated. The assumption that the Universe is a design, leads to a conclusion that there are [an] infinity of creative and created Gods, which is absurd. It is impossible indeed to prescribe limits to learned error, when Philosophy relinquishes experience and feeling for speculation.

Until it is clearly proved that the Universe was created, we may reasonably suppose that it has endured from all eternity. In a case where two propositions are diametrically opposite, the mind believes that which is less incomprehensible: it is easier to suppose that the Universe has existed from all eternity, than to conceive an eternal being capable of creating it. If the mind sinks beneath the weight of one, is it an alleviation to increase the intolerability of the burthen?

A man knows, not only that he now is, but that there was a time when he did not exist; consequently there must have been a cause. But we can only infer, from effects, causes exactly adequate to those effects. There certainly is a generative power which is effected by particular instruments; we cannot prove that it is inherent in these instruments, nor is the contrary hypothesis capable of demonstration. We admit that the generative power is incomprehensible, but to suppose that the same effects are produced by an eternal Omnipotent and Omniscient Being, leaves the cause in the same obscurity, but renders it more incomprehensible.

We can only infer from effects causes exactly adequate to those effects. An infinite number of effects demand an infinite number of causes, nor is the philosopher justified in supposing a greater connexion or unity in the latter, than is perceptible in the former. The same energy cannot be at once the cause of the serpent and the sheep; of the blight by which the harvest is destroyed, and the sunshine by which it is matured; of the ferocious propensities by which man becomes a victim to himself, and of the accurate judgment by which his institutions are improved. The spirit of our accurate and exact philosophy is outraged by conclusions which contradict each other so glaringly.

The greatest, equally with the smallest motions of the Universe, are subjected to the rigid necessity of inevitable laws. These laws are the unknown causes of the known effects perceivable in the Universe. Their effects are the boundaries of our knowledge, their names the expressions of our ignorance. To suppose some existence beyond, or above them, is to invent a second and superfluous hypothesis to account for what has already been accounted for by the laws of motion and the properties of matter. I admit that the nature of these laws is incomprehensible, but the hypothesis of a Deity adds a gratuitous difficulty, which so far from alleviating those which it is adduced to explain, requires new hypothesis for the elucidation of its own inherent contradictions.

The laws of attraction and repulsion, desire and aversion, suffice to account for every phenomenon of the moral and physical world. A precise knowledge of the properties of any object, is alone requisite to determine its manner of action. Let the mathematician be acquainted with the weight and volume of a cannon ball, together with the degree of velocity and inclination with which it is impelled, and he will accurately delineate the course it must describe, and determine the force with which it will strike an object at a given distance. Let the influencing motive, present to the mind of any person be given, and the knowledge of his consequent conduct will result. Let the bulk and velocity of a comet be discovered, and the astronomer, by the accurate estimation of the equal and contrary actions of the centripetal and centrifugal forces, will justly predict the period of its return.

The anomalous motions of the heavenly bodies, their unequal velocities and frequent aberrations, are corrected by that gravitation by which they are caused. The illustrious Laplace has shown that the approach of the Moon to the Earth, and the Earth to the Sun, is only a secular equation of a very long period, which has its maximum and minimum. The system of the Universe then is upheld solely by physical powers. The necessity of matter is the ruler of the world. It is vain philosophy which supposes more causes than are exactly adequate to explain the phenomena of things. Hypotheses non fingo: quicquid enim ex phænomenis non deducitur, hypothesis vocanda est; et hypotheses vel metaphysicæ, vel physicæ, vel qualitatum occultarum, seu mechanicæ, in philosophiâ locum non habent.

You assert that the construction of the animal machine, the fitness of certain animals to certain situations, the connexion between the organs of perception and that which is perceived; the relation between everything which exists, and that which tends to preserve it in its existence, imply design. It is manifest that if the eye could not see, nor the stomach digest, the human frame could not preserve its present mode of existence. It is equally certain, however, that the elements of its composition, if they did not exist in one form, must exist in another; and that the combinations which they would form, must so long as they endured, derive support for their peculiar mode of being from their fitness to the circumstances of their situation.

It by no means follows, that because a being exists, performing certain functions, he was fitted by another being to the performance of these functions. So rash a conclusion would conduct, as I have before shown, to an absurdity; and it becomes infinitely more unwarrantable from the consideration that the known laws of matter and motion, suffice to unravel, even in the present imperfect state of moral and physical science, the majority of those difficulties which the hypothesis of a Deity was invented to explain.

Doubtless no disposition of inert matter, or matter deprived of qualities, could ever have composed an animal, a tree, or even a stone. But matter deprived of qualities, is an abstraction, concerning which it is impossible to form an idea. Matter, such as we behold it, is not inert. It is infinitely active and subtle. Light, electricity, and magnetism are fluids not surpassed by thought itself in tenuity and activity: like thought they are sometimes the cause and sometimes the effect of motion; and, distinct as they are from every other class of substances with which we are acquainted, seem to possess equal claims with thought to the unmeaning distinction of immateriality.

The laws of motion and the properties of matter suffice to account for every phenomenon, or combination of phenomena exhibited in the Universe. That certain animals exist in certain climates, results from the consentaneity of their frames to the circumstances of their situation: let these circumstances be altered to a sufficient degree, and the elements of their composition must exist in some new combination no less resulting than the former from those inevitable laws by which the Universe is governed.

It is the necessary consequence of the organisation of man, that his stomach should digest his food: it inevitably results also from his gluttonous and unnatural appetite for the flesh of animals that his frame be diseased and his vigour impaired; but in neither of these cases is adaptation of means to end to be perceived. Unnatural diet, and the habits consequent upon its use are the means, and every complication of frightful disease is the end, but to assert that these means were adapted to this end by the Creator of the world, or that human caprice can avail to traverse the precautions of Omnipotence, is absurd. These are the consequences of the properties of organised matter; and it is a strange perversion of the understanding to argue that a certain sheep was created to be butchered and devoured by a certain individual of the human species, when the conformation of the latter, as is manifest to the most superficial student of comparative anatomy, classes him with those animals who feed on fruits and vegetables.

The means by which the existence of an animal is sustained, requires a designer in no greater degree than the existence itself of the animal. If it exists, there must be means to support its existence. In a world where omne mutatur nihil interit, no organised being can exist without a continual separation of that substance which is incessantly exhausted, nor can this separation take place otherwise than by the invariable laws which result from the relations of matter. We are incapacitated only by our ignorance from referring every phenomenon, however unusual, minute or complex, to the laws of motion and the properties of matter; and it is an egregious offence against the first principles of reason to suppose an immaterial creator of the world, in quo omnia moventur sed sine mutuâ passione: which is equally a superfluous hypothesis in the mechanical philosophy of Newton, and a useless excrescence on the inductive logic of Bacon.

What then is this harmony, this order which you maintain to have required for its establishment, what it needs not for its maintenance, the agency of a supernatural intelligence? Inasmuch as the order visible in the Universe requires one cause, so does the disorder whose operation is not less clearly apparent, demand another. Order and disorder are no more than modifications of our own perceptions of the relations which subsist between ourselves and external objects, and if we are justified in inferring the operation of a benevolent power from the advantages attendant on the former, the evils of the latter bear equal testimony to the activity of a malignant principle, no less pertinacious in inducing evil out of good, than the other is unremitting in procuring good from evil.

If we permit our imagination to traverse the obscure regions of possibility, we may doubtless imagine, according to the complexion of our minds, that disorder may have a relative tendency to unmingled good, or order be relatively replete with exquisite and subtile evil. To neither of these conclusions, which are equally presumptuous and unfounded, will it become the philosopher to assent. Order and disorder are expressions denoting our perceptions of what is injurious or beneficial to ourselves, or to the beings in whose welfare we are compelled to sympathise by the similarity of their conformation to our own.

A beautiful antelope panting under the fangs of a tiger, a defenceless ox, groaning beneath the butcher's axe, is a spectacle which instantly awakens compassion in a virtuous and unvitiated breast. Many there are, however, sufficiently hardened to the rebukes of justice and the precepts of humanity, as to regard the deliberate butchery of thousands of their species, as a theme of exultation and a source of honour, and to consider any failure in these remorseless enterprises as a defect in the system of things. The criteria of order and disorder are as various as those beings from whose opinions and feelings they result.

Populous cities are destroyed by earthquakes, and desolated by pestilence. Ambition is everywhere devoting its millions to incalculable calamity. Superstition, in a thousand shapes, is employed in brutalising and degrading the human species, and fitting it to endure without a murmur the oppression of its innumerable tyrants. All this is abstractedly neither good nor evil, because good and evil are words employed to designate that peculiar state of our own perceptions, resulting from the encounter of any object calculated to produce pleasure or pain. Exclude the idea of relation, and the words good and evil are deprived of import.

Earthquakes are injurious to the cities which they destroy, beneficial to those whose commerce was injured by their prosperity, and indifferent to others which are too remote to be affected by their influence. Famine is good to the corn-merchant, evil to the poor, and indifferent to those whose fortunes can at all times command a superfluity. Ambition is evil to the restless bosom it inhabits, to the innumerable victims who are dragged by its ruthless thirst for infamy, to expire in every variety of anguish, to the inhabitants of the country it depopulates, and to the human race whose improvement it retards; it is indifferent with regard to the system of the Universe, and is good only to the vultures and the jackals that track the conqueror's career, and to the worms who feast in security on the desolation of his progress. It is manifest that we cannot reason with respect to the universal system from that which only exists in relation to our own perceptions.

You allege some considerations in favour of a Deity from the universality of a belief in his existence.

The superstitions of the savage, and the religion of civilised Europe appear to you to conspire to prove a first cause. I maintain that it is from the evidence of revelation alone that this belief derives the slightest countenance.

That credulity should be gross in proportion to the ignorance of the mind which it enslaves, is in strict consistency with the principles of human nature. The idiot, the child, and the savage, agree in attributing their own passions and propensities to the inanimate substances by which they are either benefited or injured. The former become Gods and the latter Demons; hence prayers and sacrifices, by the means of which the rude Theologian imagines that he may confirm the benevolence of the one, or mitigate the malignity of the other. He has averted the wrath of a powerful enemy by supplications and submission; he has secured the assistance of his neighbour by offerings; he has felt his own anger subside before the entreaties of a vanquished foe, and has cherished gratitude for the kindness of another. Therefore does he believe that the elements will listen to his vows. He is capable of love and hatred towards his fellow beings, and is variously impelled by those principles to benefit or injure them. The source of his error is sufficiently obvious. When the winds, the waves and the atmosphere, act in such a manner as to thwart or forward his designs, he attributes to them the same propensities of whose existence within himself he is conscious when he is instigated by benefits to kindness, or by injuries to revenge. The bigot of the woods can form no conception of beings possessed of properties differing from his own: it requires, indeed, a mind considerably tinctured with science, and enlarged by cultivation to contemplate itself, not as the centre and model of the Universe, but as one of the infinitely various multitude of beings of which it is actually composed.

There is no attribute of God which is not either borrowed from the passions and powers of the human mind, or which is not a negation. Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Infinity, Immutability, Incomprehensibility, and Immateriality, are all words which designate properties and powers peculiar to organised beings, with the addition of negations, by which the idea of limitation is excluded.

That the frequency of a belief in God (for it is not universal) should be any argument in its favour, none to whom the innumerable mistakes of men are familiar, will assert. It is among men of genius and science that Atheism alone is found, but among these alone is cherished an hostility to those errors, with which the illiterate and vulgar are infected.

How small is the proportion of those who really believe in God, to the thousands who are prevented by their occupations from ever bestowing a serious thought upon the subject, and the millions who worship butterflies, bones, feathers, monkeys, calabashes and serpents. The word God, like other abstractions, signifies the agreement of certain propositions, rather than the presence of any idea. If we found our belief in the existence of God on the universal consent of mankind, we are duped by the most palpable of sophisms. The word God cannot mean at the same time an ape, a snake, a bone, a calabash, a Trinity, and a Unity. Nor can that belief be accounted universal against which men of powerful intellect and spotless virtue have in every age protested. ...

Hume has shown, to the satisfaction of all philosophers, that the only idea which we can form of causation is derivable from the constant conjunction of objects, and the consequent inference of one from the other. We denominate that phenomenon the cause of another which we observe with the fewest exceptions to precede its occurrence. Hence it would be inadmissible to deduce the being of a God from the existence of the Universe; even if this mode of reasoning did not conduct to the monstrous conclusion of an infinity of creative and created Gods, each more eminently requiring a Creator than its predecessor.

If Power be an attribute of existing substance, substance could not have derived its origin from power. One thing cannot be at the same time the cause and the effect of another.—The word power expresses the capability of any thing to be or act. The human mind never hesitates to annex the idea of power to any object of its experience. To deny that power is the attribute of being, is to deny that being can be. If power be an attribute of substance, the hypothesis of a God is a superfluous and unwarrantable assumption.

Intelligence is that attribute of the Deity, which you hold to be most apparent in the Universe. Intelligence is only known to us as a mode of animal being. We cannot conceive intelligence distinct from sensation and perception, which are attributes to organised bodies. To assert that God is intelligent, is to assert that he has ideas; and Locke has proved that ideas result from sensation. Sensation can exist only in an organised body, an organised body is necessarily limited both in extent and operation. The God of the rational Theosophies is a vast and wise animal.

You have laid it down as a maxim that the power of beginning motion is an attribute of mind as much as thought and sensation.

Mind cannot create, it can only perceive. Mind is the recipient of impressions made on the organs of sense, and without the action of external objects we should not only be deprived of all knowledge of the existence of mind, but totally incapable of the knowledge of any thing. It is evident, therefore, that mind deserves to be considered as the effect, rather than the cause of motion. The ideas which suggest themselves too are prompted by the circumstances of our situation, these are the elements of thought, and from the various combinations of these our feelings, opinions, and volitions inevitably result.

That which is infinite necessarily includes that which is finite. The distinction therefore between the Universe, and that by which the Universe is upheld, is manifestly erroneous. To devise the word God, that you may express a certain portion of the universal system, can answer no good purpose in philosophy: In the language of reason, the words God and Universe are synonymous.

Thus from the principles of that reason to which you so rashly appealed as the ultimate arbiter of our dispute, have I shown that the popular arguments in favour of the being of a God are totally destitute of colour. I have shown the absurdity of attributing intelligence to the cause of those effects which we perceive in the Universe, and the fallacy which lurks in the argument from design. I have shown that order is no more than a peculiar manner of contemplating the operation of necessary agents, that mind is the effect, not the cause of motion, that power is the attribute, not the origin of Being. I have proved that we can have no evidence of the existence of a God from the principles of reason.

You will have observed, from the zeal with which I have urged arguments so revolting to my genuine sentiments, and conducted to a conclusion in direct contradiction to that faith which every good man must eternally preserve, how little I am inclined to sympathise with those of my religion who have pretended to prove the existence of God by the unassisted light of reason. I confess that the necessity of a revelation has been compromised by treacherous friends to Christianity, who have maintained that the sublime mysteries of the being of a God and the immortality of the soul are discoverable from other sources than itself.

I have proved that on the principles of that philosophy to which Epicurus, Lord Bacon, Newton, Locke, and Hume were addicted, the existence of God is a chimera.

The Christian religion then, alone, affords indisputable assurance that the world was created by the power, and is preserved by the Providence of an Almighty God, who, in justice has appointed a future life for the punishment of the vicious and the remuneration of the virtuous.

Now, O Theosophus, I call upon you to decide between Atheism and Christianity; to declare whether you will pursue your principles to the destruction of the bonds of civilised society, or wear the easy yoke of that religion which proclaims "peace upon earth, goodwill to all men."

Modal Arguments for Atheism (2012) by Ryan Stringer

1. Introduction

One can put forth different kinds of arguments to defend atheism. One kind is an evidential argument, where some contingent fact about the world is cited as evidence against God's existence. Perhaps the most popular of such arguments is the evidential argument from evil, which cites the large amount of severe evil or suffering in the world as strong evidence against God's existence. Other evidential arguments for atheism include: the argument from scale[1], which cites the scale of the universe as evidence against God's existence; the argument from nonbelief[2], which cites the scope of nonbelief in God as evidence against his existence; and the argument from physical minds[3], which cites the overwhelming evidence that minds have a physical basis (or are physically realized) as evidence against God's existence. These arguments have the probabilistic conclusion that God does not exist, and thus do not conclusively demonstrate the truth of atheism.

There are also more ambitious logical arguments for atheism, which attempt to show that either (a) the proposition that God exists is logically inconsistent with some contingent fact about the world, or (b) the concept of God is logically incoherent in some way. The first kind of logical argument resembles evidential arguments because it is based on some contingent fact about the world. But unlike evidential arguments, this kind of logical argument purports to conclusively demonstrate the truth of atheism based on a logical incompatibility between the cited contingent fact about the world and the proposition that God exists. The second kind of logical argument is the most ambitious of them all. Unlike the first kind of logical argument, which concludes with the contingent truth of atheism, the second kind concludes with the necessary truth of atheism.

In addition to the better-known evidential and logical arguments for atheism, there is a third kind of argument that will be the focus of this paper: modal arguments for atheism. Unlike the other

two kinds, modal arguments begin with a possibility claim—that some proposition is possibly true. But like the second kind of logical argument, modal arguments conclude with the necessary truth of atheism. Thus modal arguments appear to be very strong, for they deliver the necessary truth of atheism on the basis of a mere possibility claim.

In order to show how they contribute to the philosophical defense of atheism, in this paper I formulate modal arguments for atheism and then examine the ways a critic might respond to them. Specifically, I aim to show that modal arguments for atheism either (a) positively support atheism or (b) at least undermine modal arguments for theism.

2. The General Structure of Modal Arguments for Atheism

Laying out the general structure of modal arguments for atheism makes it easier to generate concrete examples. With that in mind, their general structure is as follows:

It is possible that p.

Necessarily, if it is possible that God exists, then it is necessary that God exists.

Necessarily, if God exists, then it is not the case that p.

Therefore, it is not possible that God exists. (from A, B, & C)

Premise A is the formula for generating the possibility claims that underlie the modal arguments. Premise B follows from the conception of God as a necessary being: if God is a being that, conceptually speaking, exists necessarily, then it is necessarily true that he will exist in every possible world if he exists in any possible world. Premise C asserts a logical incompatibility between God's existence and the object or state of affairs held to be possible in premise A. With these premises in place we can deduce our conclusion in the following manner. First, from C it follows that "if it is necessary that God exists, then it is necessary that it is not the case that p." Next, since A is logically equivalent to "it is not necessary that it is not the case that p," it follows from A and the above consequence of C, via modus tollens, that "it is not necessary that God exists." Then from this and B it follows, again via modus tollens, that "it is not possible that God exists."

3. Generating Modal Arguments for Atheism

With the general structure of these arguments in place, we can now generate specific arguments by substituting an actual proposition for p. But how do we determine what proposition to use in place of p? How do we know if a given proposition will work? Here we must find a proposition that is logically inconsistent with the proposition "God exists"—that is, a proposition that, when plugged in for p, will give us a true C-premise. One way to do this is to look at evidential arguments for atheism. For example, recall that the evidential argument from evil cites the large amount of severe evil or suffering in the world as evidence against God's existence. This is cited as evidence for atheism because it is probably gratuitous—that is, there is probably no morally sufficient reason for God to permit or create it. And that is precisely the kind of evil that God, as a morally perfect being, has complete control over but would never permit or create. Consequently, God and gratuitous evil cannot possibly coexist. Thus, our first instance of p could be:

Gratuitous evil exists.

Plugging this proposition in for p would give us the modal argument from gratuitous evil.[4]

Another evidential argument to look at here is the one from physical minds. Since God is necessarily a minded, nonphysical being, he could not exist if all minds were physically realized. And if God did exist, then it could not be the case that all minds are physically realized. So God's existence and the physical realization of all minds are logically incompatible things. Thus, our second instance of p could be:

All minds are physically realized.

Plugging this proposition in for p would then give us the modal argument from physical minds.

Now let's look at the evidential arguments from nonbelief and scale. Unfortunately, neither will help us to construct more modal arguments for atheism because there is a crucial difference between them and the evidential arguments from evil and physical minds. To see this difference, first note that these arguments each involve (basically) two claims: an incompatibility claim asserting a logical incompatibility between God's existence and some state of affairs S, and an evidence claim asserting that S obtains. Again, all of these arguments have atheism as their probabilistic conclusion. However, when it comes to the arguments from evil and physical minds, it is the evidence claim that is probabilistic, whereas the incompatibility claim is not. But when it comes to the arguments from nonbelief and scale, it is the incompatibility claim, and not the evidence claim, that is probabilistic. Since their incompatibility claims are only probabilistic, these two arguments do not help us here: they would not provide airtight C-premises, and thus would not generate airtight modal arguments for atheism.

Fortunately, other bases for strong modal arguments for atheism can be found without looking at evidential arguments. For example, since God is morally perfect, he will not allow a state of affairs to obtain in which every free person besides himself always does the morally wrong thing. So our third instance of p could be:

Every metaphysically free, non-God person always does the morally wrong thing.

Plugging this proposition in for p would then give us what I will call the modal argument from super depravity.[5] Now if (3) is objectionable for some reason, we could use a similar, more modest claim for our third instance of p. This is:

3'. The world's metaphysically free, non-God creatures produce more moral evil than moral goodness such that their freedom is not worth the cost.

Plugging this proposition in for p instead of (3) would give us what I will call the modal argument from depravity.

There are at least two other bases for generating good modal arguments for atheism. Let's say that something is a maltheistic deity if and only if it has the properties of being omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly evil. Any being that qualifies as a maltheistic deity cannot possibly coexist with God.[6] For suppose that God and such a maltheistic deity coexist. Since both are omniscient,

omnipotent beings, it is impossible for either to thwart the will of the other, for it is logically impossible to thwart the will of a being that is omniscient and omnipotent. Moreover, their wills will be in complete conflict with each other since God is perfectly good and a maltheistic deity is perfectly evil. Now let's say that God wills something. Since he is omniscient and omnipotent, it is impossible for his will to be thwarted; so God will succeed in his willing. However, since the maltheistic deity is also omniscient and omnipotent, it is impossible for its will to be thwarted; so it will succeed in thwarting God's will. Therefore, God will also not succeed in his willing, which obviously contradicts that God will succeed in his willing. The same kind of contradiction can be generated by supposing first that the maltheistic deity wills something. Since the supposition that both God and a maltheistic deity exist leads to logical contradictions, these beings cannot possibly coexist. We thus have a fourth instance of p with:

A maltheistic deity exists.

Plugging this in for p would give us the modal argument from a maltheistic deity. In fact, this argument could actually be a template for several such arguments since there appears to be more than one possible being that qualifies as a maltheistic deity. An easy way to generate multiple possible maltheistic deities is by adding a single property at a time. For instance, we can get a unique maltheistic deity by adding the property of necessary existence to omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect evilness; and a different one by adding the property of contingent existence instead.

Finally, there is another basis for modal arguments for atheism that is more like a template for several such arguments—perhaps even an infinite number of them. First of all, it is necessarily true that if God exists, then he is the creator of the universe. In other words, God's existence necessarily precludes any other being from creating the universe. So we have a fifth instance of p with:

Some other being besides God created the universe.

Plugging this in for p would then give us the modal argument from a different creator. Of course, there are numerous possible beings besides God—perhaps an infinite number of them—that could have created the universe. So for each proposition asserting that one particular non-God being created the universe—or that several particular non-God beings did so—we could generate a good modal argument for atheism. Thus there are several (if not infinitely many) modal arguments from a different creator.

4. Responding to Modal Arguments for Atheism

So, what are we to make of arguments that deliver the necessary truth of atheism from a mere possibility claim? Surely such a strong atheistic conclusion cannot be delivered so easily and cheaply—as well as an infinite number of times! There must be something fishy going on here.

But what is it about these arguments that stinks? There is no obvious culprit here. Since the arguments are all deductively valid, the problem must lie with one or more of the premises themselves. But even then there is still no obvious culprit. The A-premises are all quite strong: besides their intuitive plausibility, the objects or states of affairs that they assert to be possible are

all conceivable, coherent things.[7] Moreover, at least (1) and (2) are very plausible in their own right. For the horrific evil we face in this world certainly appears, upon philosophical reflection, to be gratuitous—there is no discernible justification for God to permit or create it. And it is, of course, very plausible for this evil to really be how it appears to be. Our best evidence also suggests that all minds with which we are acquainted are physically realized, which in turn suggests that all minds are physically realized. Though this evidence could be deceiving, it is again very plausible that things really are as they appear here. But since (1) and (2) are very plausible in their own right, surely the mere possibility of them being true is as strong as possibilities come.

Then there is B and the C-premises. As mentioned above, the former follows from the conception of God as a necessary being, which is popular among philosophers. The latter are all airtight incompatibility claims; so they are beyond dispute. What, then, are the possible options for contesting these arguments? Well, one can contest the A-premises or contest B. Let's begin with the first one. Even though the A-premises are all quite strong, there are nevertheless two strategies (that I know of) for contesting them. One is to directly contest them by trying to show that the objects or states of affairs that they assert to be possible are really incoherent things. However, this is not a viable strategy: not only would this be an endless task in virtue of the countless non-God beings that could have created the universe, but it is surely false that all of the seemingly possible objects or states of affairs are really incoherent things. The more promising strategy is to contest the A-premises indirectly by putting forth some theistic counterargument that specifically delivers the conclusion that:

It is necessary that God exists.

Armed with this proposition, an imagined critic can deduce the falsity of the A-premises from Q and the C-premises. But how should one go about getting Q?

Not just any theistic argument will work here. In order to give our imagined critic what he or she needs to deduce the falsity of the A-premises, the argument must specifically conclude with Q—that is, it must point specifically to a necessarily existing God. However, most theistic arguments do not do so, such as those that appeal to the existence, order, complexity, "fine-tuning," or apparent design of the universe, or to the existence of minds, reason, miracles, religious experiences, and so on. The bases of these arguments do not even point specifically towards God, let alone to a necessarily existing one. And even if they did offer some support for the existence of God (which I think is false), they would still offer no support for a necessarily existing God over a contingently existing one.

One exception here is the modal cosmological argument, which invokes a necessarily existing God as the one necessary being needed to explain why contingent beings exist. But as I have shown elsewhere, this argument is invalid: it does not point specifically to God, or even to only one necessary being. It is also based on the rather dubious principle of sufficient reason, and so will not give our imagined critic what he or she needs to deduce the falsity of the A-premises.

As far as I can tell, the only viable option left is to use an ontological argument.[9] Now the classic ontological argument will not work because it is clearly invalid.[10] But a modal version of the ontological argument will work, and it can be formulated quite simply as:

It is possible that God exists.

Necessarily, if it is possible that God exists, then it is necessary that God exists.

Therefore, it is necessary that God exists. (from B & P)

In fact, this argument works very well in the present context. Unlike most theistic arguments, it is clearly valid (as a straightforward example of modus ponens) and does not contain any premise that embodies an invalid inference. Furthermore, it essentially tries to beat modal arguments for atheism at their own game. For besides using premise B just as modal arguments for atheism use it, it too rests on a possibility claim that can be defended on similar grounds as our A-premises: not only is it intuitively plausible, but God is a conceivable, coherent thing. Thus, putting forth the modal ontological argument is the best way for our imagined critic to contest the A-premises.

In response, we could point out that there are numerous arguments that P is false because the concept of God is actually an incoherent concept. However, we must ignore such arguments, for although they cause problems for theism, falling back on them to contest P would render modal arguments for atheism superfluous. Namely, if we can provide independent grounds to doubt the coherence of the concept of God, then we do not need modal arguments for atheism. In fact, if any incoherence argument works, then atheism is established and theism is destroyed—any other atheistic argument, or demonstration of the failure of theistic arguments, would be unnecessary. Thus, we must ignore incoherence arguments in order for modal arguments for atheism to have the merit that I attribute to them in this paper.

But even if we ignore incoherence arguments, contesting our A-premises by appealing to the modal ontological argument fails to defeat modal arguments for atheism. First of all, P and any given A-premise are, at best, equally plausible—it would be absurd to claim that P is more plausible than any of the A-premises. For even if P is intuitively plausible, and God is a conceivable, coherent thing, the same can be said of the objects or states of affairs said to be possible in the A-premises. Now the equal plausibility of P and any given A-premise implies that the modal ontological argument and any given modal argument for atheism are on an equal footing—that the soundness of one argument is as plausible as the soundness of the other. But since the soundness of one argument implies the unsoundness of the other, the soundness of any given modal argument for atheism is as plausible as its unsoundness. Therefore, at best the modal ontological argument undermines any given modal argument for atheism considered by itself.

However, even if the modal ontological argument undermines any given modal argument for atheism taken alone, the modal ontological argument certainly does not undermine the entire set of modal arguments for atheism. To see why, consider first the disjunction of the A-premises:

(DA) A1 or A2 or A3 or A4 or A5.

Since the truth of this proposition only requires that one of its disjuncts be true, and since each one is just as plausible as P, it has a much higher probability of being true than P—especially if DA has an infinite number of disjuncts. So DA is more plausible than P. Consequently, it is more plausible that at least one of the modal arguments for atheism is sound and that the modal ontological argument is unsound than that the modal ontological argument is sound while the

modal arguments for atheism are unsound. Thus the modal ontological argument does not undermine the entire set of modal arguments for atheism.

Suppose that P is somehow more plausible than any given A-premise. While this would defeat the claim that P and any given A-premise are equally plausible, it would not necessarily undermine the higher probability of DA. For suppose that DA does have an infinite number of disjuncts, and that each one has some chance of being true. If so, then the probability of DA, regardless of the probability of each individual disjunct, approaches 1. So no matter how much more plausible P is than any of DA's disjuncts, DA is still more plausible than P.

Furthermore, even if DA has only a finite number of disjuncts, it is still more likely to be true than P. For given the conservative assumptions that (a) either DA or P must be true, (b) each disjunct again has some chance of being true, and (c) there are only 5 disjuncts, each disjunct only needs to have a probability of at least .14 in order for DA to have a higher probability than P.[14] However, an estimated probability of .14 for each A-premise is not only absurdly low in its own right, but results in P having a probability of .47—almost 3.5 times as likely as each A-premise! This is absurdly generous. We should therefore estimate the probability of each A-premise to be higher than .14, which means that we should estimate DA to be more probable than P. So once again, DA is more plausible than P.

In a final attempt to contest the set of modal arguments for atheism by contesting their A-premises, our imagined critic could argue that the modal ontological argument is not the only counterargument to be considered. In addition to P, there are several other possibility claims that, when combined with B, entail Q, and thus the falsity of the A-premises. More specifically, our imagined critic could generate a new possibility claim, and hence a new theistic counterargument, by removing the proposition "God exists" from P and replacing it with any of the following:

God created the universe.

Jesus was the son of God.

God spoke to Abraham.

There is eternal communion with God.

The Ten Commandments were given by God.

The Bible is the word of God.

The Koran is the word of God.

Satan rebelled against God.

God loves everyone.

There are countless other examples that could work here—perhaps even an infinite number of them. So in place of a single modal theistic argument, there is actually a set of such arguments comparable to the set of modal arguments for atheism. Consequently, even if the modal ontological

argument by itself does not undermine the entire set of modal arguments for atheism, the set of modal theistic arguments does undermine it (or so our imagined critic would argue).[15]

As clever as it may be, this response does not work. The problem here is that taking "God exists" out of P and replacing it with anything like (7) through (15) above would not really generate a new modal argument for theism. In fact, the above procedure would not really involve taking the proposition "God exists" out of P at all, but would instead involve adding something to this proposition that does not do any independent work. For instance, consider the possibility claim generated from (7): it is possible that God created the universe. This amounts to the claim that "it is possible that God exists and created the universe." Now it is true that this claim can be substituted in for P in the modal ontological argument, and that the argument will still remain valid. However, it is the proposition "God exists" that is still doing all of the work—adding that he created the universe is completely superfluous. What our imagined critic needs to do is generate modal arguments for theism in the same way that I generated modal arguments for atheism. After finding the first instance of p with "gratuitous evil exists," I did not try to find other instances by tacking on superfluous additions to gratuitous evil (e.g., specific victims). Since it is the evil that would be doing all of the work here, such a procedure would not have delivered truly new instances of p, and thus would not have delivered new modal arguments for atheism. Instead, this procedure would have delivered only a single modal argument for atheism presented in different ways. I therefore found other objects or states of affairs that are completely independent of gratuitous evil, and it is because they worked on their own that I was able to use them to generate new modal arguments for atheism. By following the faulty tacking-on procedure, our imagined critic has merely found different ways to present the modal ontological argument; and until he or she can apply the procedure that I followed to theism, the modal ontological argument is the only modal theistic argument available to be pitted against the set of modal arguments for atheism.

Since contesting the A-premises failed to refute modal arguments for atheism, contesting B—which amounts to contesting the conception of God as a necessary being—is the only option left. Luckily for theists, this is a good response to such arguments. For starters, B is suspicious since it is the only premise in these modal arguments (the ontological argument and those for atheism) that asserts the entailment of a necessity from a mere possibility. It is ultimately responsible for the fishiness of deducing the necessary truth of atheism from mere possibility claims.

There are also grounds for thinking that B is false. For one thing, B implies that P and the A-premises are logically inconsistent with each other. But this inconsistency is suspect: as stated above, P and the A-premises are all intuitively plausible, and their objects or states of affairs are conceivable, coherent things. Since there seems to be no logical inconsistency between P and the A-premises, B appears to be false. Furthermore, it is trivially true that if it is necessary that God exists, then it is possible that God exists. But from this and B it follows that "it is necessary that God exists" and "it is possible that God exists" are logically equivalent propositions. However, such a consequence seems false—claims of possibility and necessity are on opposite sides of the modal spectrum. So again, B appears to be false.

Finally, there appears to be no good reason to conceive of God as a necessary being, and thus no grounds for thinking that B is true. As I have argued elsewhere[16], neither the need for God to

exist independently of all else, nor the idea that necessary existence is a perfection, constitute a good reason for conceiving of God as a necessary being. Instead, God seems to be (conceptually speaking) a logically contingent being—one that exists in some, though not all, possible worlds.

On the other hand, Alvin Plantinga offers some very promising grounds for conceiving of God as a necessary being. While necessary existence is not itself a perfection, perhaps it is a necessary condition of perfection.[17] First, consider that the goodness of a being in a world W may not be a function of the being's properties in that world alone; it may also depend upon its properties in other worlds. If so, then a truly perfect being must have the set of traditional, perfect-making divine attributes (let's call this set T) in the world in which it exists, as well as in every other possible world. But since existence is a necessary condition of having properties (things that do not exist do not have properties, according to Plantinga), a being must exist in order to have T. So if a perfect being must have T in every possible world, and having T in every possible world requires existing in every possible world, then a perfect being must exist in every possible world. And since God is, by definition, a perfect being, he must be conceived of as a being that exists in every possible world—that is, as a necessary being.

Despite its brilliance, I think this attempt to vindicate the necessary beinghood of God fails. To see why, consider first the following observation made by Plantinga:

Those who worship God do not think of him as a being that happens to be of surpassing excellence in this world but who in some other worlds is powerless or uninformed or of dubious moral character.

But why do people not think of God in this way? Well, if God had T in this world and had properties that fell short of T in others, then God would have T accidentally. But if God had T accidentally, then God could fail to have T, which in turn implies that God is not perfect—he would be a better being if he could not fail to have T.[19] However, God is perfect by definition; so he could not fail to have T, or have T accidentally. Instead, God must have T essentially, or in every possible world in which he exists. The upshot here is that God's perfection requires that he have T essentially and not accidentally, which means that God's goodness is a function of his having T essentially instead of accidentally. This can then be generalized: the goodness of any being is a function of whether it has its properties essentially, or accidentally.

The idea that a being's goodness is a function of whether it has its properties essentially or accidentally seems to be what Plantinga is driving at when he suggests that the goodness of a being in a world W depends on its properties in other worlds. If so, then Plantinga seems to be correct. However, he has not established that a perfect being must have T in every possible world. Instead, he has established that a perfect being must have T essentially, which is consistent with this being's logical contingency. Put another way, Plantinga has established that a being's perfection requires that it have T in every world it happens to grace, not that it must instantiate T in every possible world.

On the other hand, isn't the claim that a perfect being must have T in every possible world still plausible? That depends on whether a necessary being that has T essentially is a better being than a logically contingent being that has T essentially. I don't think that such a being would be better,

for if it were, then maximal exemplification of T would have to contribute to perfect beinghood—having T essentially would not be sufficient for perfect beinghood. But why should we think this? We would not think, for example, that a soccer player with the best possible soccer skills is a better soccer player than another with the same skills just because the former played in every game of the season while the latter played in only some of them. Here the rate at which a perfect skill is exemplified is irrelevant to being a perfect soccer player—all it takes is the possession of certain skills. Likewise, a necessary God does not seem to be a better being than a logically contingent God just because the former's essential T-properties are exemplified in every possible world, while the latter's essential T-properties are only exemplified in some. All it takes to be a perfect being is having T essentially, and this is true of both Gods. So it does not seem to be true that a perfect being must have T in every possible world. Consequently, Plantinga has not provided good grounds for conceiving of God as a necessary being.

At this point, then, we seem to have no good reason to conceive of God as a necessary being, and thus no grounds for thinking that B is true. On the other hand, we do seem to have good grounds for thinking that B is false. So until it can be shown otherwise, rejecting B is a viable way—indeed, the only viable way—to reject modal arguments for atheism.

5. Modal Arguments for Atheism and the Philosophical Defense of Atheism

I have shown that premise B is the only viable place to contend modal arguments for atheism. But no matter what B's epistemic status, modal arguments for atheism make a contribution to the philosophical defense of atheism. For suppose that B is true, or at least more plausible than its negation. If so, then the only threat to modal arguments for atheism is the modal ontological argument. However, the set of modal arguments for atheism is stronger than the modal ontological argument: because DA is more plausible than P, it is more plausible that at least one of the modal arguments for atheism is sound and that the modal ontological argument is unsound than that all of the modal arguments for atheism are unsound and that the modal ontological argument is sound. So if B is true or more plausible than its negation, then atheism is positively supported by modal arguments for atheism.

Now suppose that B is false, or at least no more plausible than its negation. If so, then modal arguments for atheism thereby fail, but the modal ontological argument and modal cosmological argument also fail, for they too rely upon the conception of God as a necessary being. Put another way, even if modal arguments for atheism fail in virtue of relying on the conception of God as a necessary being, they take the modal ontological argument and modal cosmological argument down with them. So even if modal arguments for atheism do not positively support atheism, they still make a contribution to the philosophical defense of atheism.

Omniscience and Learning (2010) by Ryan Stringer

I. Introduction

Can God know what it is like to learn? If God is omniscient (all-knowing), then it seems that he would have to know what it is like to learn. However, in order to know what it is like to learn, one must have learned something, which involves moving from a state of not-knowing to a state of

knowing. This entails that at one time we were in a state of not-knowing a thing that was learned, then experienced what it is like to learn. But if God is essentially omniscient, he always is and has been omniscient, so was never in a state of not-knowing. Because being in a state of not-knowing is necessary to know what it is like to learn, we would seem to have to say that God does not know what it is like to learn. But this contradicts the original claim that he does know this based on his omniscience. Thus, it seems that God's omniscience generates a contradiction. Consequently an omniscient God cannot exist.

II. A Formal Presentation of the Argument

The argument above can be rigorously stated through the following reductio ad absurdum:

(P1) An essentially omniscient being, God, exists. (assumption for indirect proof)

(P2) God is and always has been omniscient. (from P1)

(P3) A being's omniscience entails, among other things, that it has all experiential knowledge. (necessary truth)

(P4) Having all experiential knowledge entails knowing what it is like to learn. (necessary truth)

(P5) God knows and always has known what it is like to learn. (from P2-P4)

(P6) Knowing what it is like to learn entails having learned something. (necessary truth)

(P7) Having learned something entails that one has gone from a state of not-knowing to a state of knowing. (necessary truth)

(P8) God has gone from a state of not-knowing to a state of knowing. (from P5-P7)

(P9) There was a time when God was in a state of not-knowing. (from P8)

(P10) God has not always been omniscient. (from P9)

(P11) God has always been omniscient and has not always been omniscient. (from P2 & P10)

(C) Therefore, God does not exist. (from P1-P11)

III. Possible Objections to the Argument

(1) The first possible place of contention is P1, where a critic could reject committing to God's essential omniscience—the notion that, as an essential property, omniscience necessarily (and thus always) belongs to God. This imagined critic might think that at one time God was almost omniscient, and shortly thereafter acquired his last two pieces of knowledge—X, and what it is like to learn. However, this strange position has no obvious candidate for X, and in any case does not seem to be a real threat to the argument because P1 is a necessary truth by stipulation of the traditional conception of God as essentially omniscient.

(2) Another possible place of contention is P3—perhaps experiential knowledge (knowing what it is like to experience something) is not included in omniscience. For instance, perhaps omniscience only entails having all propositional knowledge. In that case omniscience only entails that a being

knows all true propositions and believes no false ones—not that it has all experiential knowledge.[1] However, this objection questionably assumes that experiential knowledge does not count as a genuine kind of knowledge, contrary to our common linguistic practices. For instance, assertions like "I know what it is like to lose someone close to me," "I know what it is like to be nauseous," or "I know what it is like to be an atheist" seem unproblematic.[2] We also quite frequently talk about learning what something is like, which implies acquiring information or knowledge about the world. Moreover, people can sometimes participate in discussions based on similarities in experience, while those lacking the relevant experiences cannot participate in the same way. This suggests that the "experienced" individuals possess genuine information (or knowledge) about the world that the "nonexperienced" individuals do not possess.[3] Thus there is a strong presumption that experiential knowledge counts as genuine knowledge, and this should be taken for granted until good epistemological grounds for rejecting it are provided. Until then, the claim that omniscience can only involve propositional knowledge is unjustified.[4]

A critic might also contest P3 by rejecting a literal definition of "all-knowing." Perhaps we should impose logical boundaries such that "all-knowing" means "knowing everything that is logically possible for a given being to know." This revised definition of omniscience entails the following:

(P3') A being's omniscience entails, among other things, that it has all the experiential knowledge that it is logically possible for it to have.

But this allows for the falsity of P3: it may be the case that some experiential knowledge is logically impossible for an omniscient being to have, so a being's omniscience may not entail that it has all experiential knowledge. On the other hand, this revised definition of "all-knowing"—besides being counterintuitive—has a major drawback: it allows for inanimate objects that know nothing, or beings that know almost nothing, to count as omniscient beings.[5] Rocks and grains of sand cannot know anything by definition, so they know everything that is logically possible for them to know—and so would count as omniscient on this revised definition. Or consider the being McIgnorant, who by definition has extremely limited knowledge, yet is still "omniscient" because it knows everything that is logically possible for it to know. Obviously, these are not true examples of omniscience, so the revised definition of omniscience should be rejected in favor of the literal definition, leaving P3 secure.

Furthermore, even if the revised definition of omniscience were correct, making P3 dubious, my argument could be salvaged by introducing the following proposition:

(L) It is logically possible for God to know what it is like to learn.

This proposition, when conjoined with P2 and P3', entails P5, so the remainder of the argument remains intact. As such, the rejection of P3 based on revising the definition of omniscience is not sufficient to undermine my argument; instead, the rejection of L is also required. However, rejecting L has some serious drawbacks. For starters, if it is logically impossible for God to know what it is like to learn, then he cannot know something that (a) all humans can know and (b) almost all humans do know. But this conflicts with the following premises[6]:

(Q1) An omniscient being knows everything that nonomniscient beings know.

(Q2) God knows everything that humans know.

These premises are not only intuitive, but they have the feel of conceptual truths; it makes little sense to think that nonomniscient beings (like humans) could know something that an omniscient being (like God) would not know. It is much more natural to think that a being who does not know something that is known to a nonomniscient being is itself not omniscient, for there is at least one genuine piece of knowledge that it does not possess, even if it is exponentially more knowledgeable than other nonomniscient beings. What's more, the denial of L entails that God does not know something that is extremely easy for us humans to know, something that even the least intelligent humans can and do know. It is very strange, to say the least, for an extremely intelligent being like God to be incapable of knowing something that we humans can easily acquire, and that even the least intelligent humans know. Of course, these odd and seemingly senseless consequences of denying L could be true because L (as far as we can tell) could be false; but given such bizarre consequences, it is more plausible to avoid them by accepting L, which in turn leaves my argument intact.

(3) The only other place of contention that I can foresee is P6, despite its strong intuitive appeal and supporting empirical evidence. Conceivably, a critic could argue, a being could know what it is like to learn without having learned something; and perhaps God's mind contains the experiential knowledge of what it is like to learn without him ever having had to learn something. For if having the knowledge of what it is like to learn is a certain state of mind, then perhaps God's mind (unlike ours) has this state of mind—a state of knowing what it is like to learn without ever having to learn anything. Thus, P6 is conceivably false.

In response, we might argue that the falsity of P6 is not a genuine possibility because P6 is a conceptual truth. Its antecedent, "knowing what it is like to learn," refers to having experiential knowledge of learning—i.e., experiential knowledge with the activity of learning as its content. Experiential knowledge, by definition, is knowledge of having or going through an experience; so it requires actually going through an experience. Thus, experiential knowledge of learning requires having the experience of learning; and because learning is an activity in which something is learned, having the experience of learning is nothing more than having the experience of learning something. Moreover, this (genuine) experience of learning something has, quite obviously, learning something as its content. This means that having this experience requires the learning of something. Therefore, the consequent of P6 ("having learned something") appears to conceptually follow from its antecedent ("knowing what it is like to learn"), which would make P6 a conceptual truth.

IV. Conclusion

This short paper attempts to demonstrate that atheism is true by deriving a contradiction from the assumption that God, an essentially omniscient being, exists. After presenting the argument, I examined possible objections to it and found none of them to be forceful. Thus, until strong argument to the contrary can be offered, I conclude that my argument is sound: not only does God not exist, but it is not even possible for him to exist.[7]

The Argument from the Existence of Nondeities (2013) by Horia Plugaru

Introduction

This paper defends the argument that if the traditional theistic God were to exist, then there are strong reasons to think that there would exist only deities. I call this "The Argument from the Existence of Nondeities" (AEND). If the argument succeeds, God would have no rational grounds for creating our present world, which contains nondeities. But since the present world clearly exists, it follows that (a maximally rational) God does not exist.

After formalizing the argument, I defend its crucial first premise. I then comment on the importance of the argument and defend it against five objections.

The Argument from the Existence of Nondeities

AEND can be formally stated as follows:

If the theistic God were to exist, then the only world that he would create would contain only gods—namely beings that possess most of his attributes.

The existing world does not contain only gods; indeed, in this world there exist exclusively nondeities.

Therefore, the theistic God does not exist. (From 1 and 2, by modus tollens)

AEND's second premise is true beyond a reasonable doubt. Human beings, animals, and plants are far from god-like beings. The first premise, then, is what requires the defense to which I now turn.

In Support of Premise (1)

According to theism, God is, above all, a perfect being. He is personal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent (morally perfect and all-loving). Call this the layperson's view of God. More sophisticated versions of theism also endow God with being perfectly rational, completely free, eternal (with no beginning and no end), immutable (unchanging), and necessarily existent (existing in every possible world).

Both the layperson's view of God and more sophisticated versions of theism have been criticized as unintelligible or incoherent. As an anonymous reader of a previous version of the paper pointed out:

I find the idea of "necessary existence" to be unintelligible. In my view, it is always possible that nothing exist, but even if I am wrong, and it is necessary that something (or other) exist, I can make no sense of the idea that there is some particular thing which necessarily exists. As [David] Hume said, whatever can be conceived as existing can be conceived as not existing. There are further problems with combining omnipotence with other properties in a definition. Suppose a being were defined as "omnipotent and omniscient." Would such a being be able to learn anything new?

For the sake of argument, however, I will here assume that both the layperson's concept of God and that of sophisticated theists is meaningful and coherent. Theists typically argue that God is

under no (moral, logical, or metaphysical) obligation to create anything. If he nevertheless chooses to create, he does so out of love and generosity.

Now, if such a perfect being would decide to create another life form out of love and generosity, this created being would have to be the best possible being that could be created. For if God created something less than the best possible for no sufficient reason, then he would be an imperfect creator.

What attributes would God endow on his creature? Attributes that resemble his own: if God is perfect, then his attributes are good. Moreover, there is no other attribute that is good but that God lacks. Otherwise, he would not be perfect. So, for example, since God is personal, it follows that being a person is good, and so God would create a person. If God is all-powerful, then possessing power is a good thing, and so his creature would also be powerful. If God is omniscient, then having knowledge is a good thing, and so his creation would have knowledge. If God has free will, then having free will is a good thing, and so his creation would have free will. And so on for the rest of the divine attributes.

But to what degree would God's created entity possess these attributes? Well, if a perfect being who creates voluntarily can create nothing less than the best possible being, then his creature would possess the aforementioned attributes to the highest degree possible. For example, the highest degree of power that a being could have is omnipotence, namely being capable of doing anything that is logically possible. God would not create a less-than-omnipotent being, then, because one could not be the best possible being: a better being could be imagined, one that is more powerful. Since a perfect creator would create the best possible being, it follows that God would not choose anything less than omnipotence for his creature. For parallel reasons God would create a being that is all-knowing and morally perfect. If one accepts a sophisticated definition of theism, then God's creature would also have to be perfectly rational, completely free, eternal, and immutable (unchanging).

If this line of reasoning is correct, a perfect God that chooses to create another personal being would create nothing less than another god: a creature that is personal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent (morally perfect and all-loving). If we accept a more sophisticated theism, then God's creature would also be perfectly rational, completely free, immutable, and eternal. I will refer to such a created god with the lowercase word "god." Just as God is considered the greatest conceivable being, so his created beings can be viewed as the greatest conceivable created beings.

Obviously, this kind of god lacks one of God's essential properties according to more sophisticated theists: he doesn't exist necessarily, but contingently, given the fact that God brought him into existence by an act of free will, not by any obligation to do so. Consequently, the created god is not eternal in the sense of having an existence without beginning and without end, but only in the sense of being immortal, that is, having an existence with no end.

How many of these gods would God create? If a being is brought into existence by a morally perfect being, its existence is a good thing. But God, being morally perfect, omnipotent, and perfectly rational, would not stop at doing only one good thing if he is able to do more of them.

If creating a god is good, then creating two gods is better. But creating three gods is even better than creating only two. And so on, ad infinitum. God would want to create as many gods as possible, in order to give as many of them as possible the opportunity to enjoy infinite happiness, which stems from both communion with God and the fellowship of other gods, and from being as close to perfection as it is possible for them to be. If an actual infinite can exist in reality, then the number of gods will be infinite. If, on the other hand, an actual infinite cannot exist in reality, then God would actualize the largest possible number of gods, something like trillions upon trillions—an unlimited number. Either way, he will create a multitude of gods, as AEND's first premise states. Let us call the world containing God and all of the other created gods "world A."

Is this scenario logically impossible? It does not seem to be. If God is omnipotent, he can actualize anything that is logically possible. Assuming that God exists, it follows that all of his attributes, taken either separately or together, are logically possible. I can see no reason why God couldn't create a being that knows all that there is to know, or that is morally perfect and free. Thus, God is indeed able to create another being that shared his attributes—except for his necessary existence (and consequent eternal existence). Nor does it appear to be problematic to actualize more than two gods with such attributes. Omnipotence could raise difficulties—for example, could there be two or more omnipotent beings? Wouldn't their power cancel or limit each other? The answer is no, for all godly beings would be morally perfect, omniscient, and perfectly rational. Thus, no disagreement could arise that would lead them to use their powers in different or contradictory ways. If we adopt a popular interpretation of omnipotence—namely, that a deity is omnipotent if it is able to do anything that is in accord with its own nature—then there cannot be any situation where two or more gods come into conflict, for they all have the same perfect nature.

What would all the godly beings created by God do with their omnipotence? They would use it exactly the same way that God used it—to bring into existence more gods, and for the same omnibenevolent reasons that God had to create other gods. If actual infinities cannot exist in reality, then each god would produce an unlimited number of gods. But what if an actual infinite can exist in reality, and God had already created an infinite number of gods? Would it still be possible for these gods to add yet more gods to world A? Yes, because it would be possible to add a new infinity to an already existing one, as is the case in the Hilbert's Hotel thought experiment.

Consider a hypothetical hotel with infinitely many rooms. Every room contains a guest. Would the hotel be able to accommodate any newly arriving guests? Yes, by moving the person occupying room 1 to room 2, the guest occupying room 2 to room 4, and in general room n to room 2n. In this way all the odd-numbered rooms will be free for the new guests. Therefore, even assuming that infinities can exist in reality, and that God would have already created an infinite number of gods, it is still possible for these gods to create an infinite number of gods of their own. In fact, since gods are not material beings, they would not take up space, so there would not be any need to move or replace them like the guests in Hilbert's Hotel. The gods created by other gods would have exactly the same attributes as their creators: personal, omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent (morally perfect and all-loving), perfectly rational, completely free, immortal, and immutable (unchanging).

What can be said about the relation between the divine beings and time? Are they atemporal? Or perhaps they create other gods while being in time? I suppose it makes most sense to understand them as creating in time, much like God is said to create a new soul every time a human being is conceived. Of course, it may just as well be intelligible for gods to give rise to other gods outside of time. AEND does not require one or the other view of divine existence in relation with time. And on the second variant even created gods will be eternal in the sense of having no beginning, since there isn't any moment in time in which they do not exist. However, I will operate under the assumption that they exist in time, since it seems to me this concept is easier to follow.

To be sure, it is difficult if not impossible to describe exactly how God creates other gods, and then how these other gods create other gods, and so on. AEND faces what could be called the "modus operandi problem." But this is not a problem for AEND per se so much as one for any argument that assumes God created anything. AEND's goal is not to resolve such issues, but only to argue that if God were to exist and decide to create something, then he would actualize a world containing a multitude of gods. As Nicholas Everitt put it, "atheism can be no more precise than the theism which it rejects."

AEND's first premise has also some biblical support: "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). If God wants his creatures to be as perfect as he is, then it would be reasonable for him to create gods instead of human beings, since only a god could be as perfect as he is.

World A has three features that would certainly please God to the highest degree possible: it is absolutely free from (1) evil, (2) ugliness[3], and (3) skepticism about his existence. Indeed, the morally perfect, all-knowing, completely rational, and free created gods will never do anything wrong, just as God never does anything wrong. In fact, at any point in time, world A would contain the highest possible amount of love and harmony between all of its inhabitants. Moreover, the gods will know that God exists and that they owe their blissful existence to him. Thus, without exception, all of them would be profoundly thankful to God and would freely choose to maximally appreciate and worship him as their creator. Each of these gods will be as happy and content as possible, finding the greatest joy not only in their individual existence, but especially in the company of God and all of the other gods.

Whether world A is perfect is arguable because (regardless of whether real infinities exist) new inhabitants could always be added to it. Perhaps a case could be made that if world A contains, say, ten gods at moment t, this world is not really inferior to world A at moment s, when it contains eleven gods. Maybe world A at t and world A at s are different worlds, but both are perfect. The fact that the eleventh god is missing in world A at moment t does not necessarily mean that the eleventh god was harmed in some way, for the simple reason that he doesn't exist in world A at t. As David Benatar remarks, "the absence of pleasure is not bad unless there is somebody for whom this absence is a deprivation."[4] Thus, it may be possible both for world A at t to be perfect because it does not contain anything negative which could detract from its perfection and for that world A at s to be preferable to world A at t because it contains one more infinitely happy being, even though both worlds are perfect. In my view the fact that world A at s is preferable to world

A at t implies that world A at t could be improved, and such room for improvement signals that world A at t is not truly perfect.

Nevertheless, assuming that it is irrational (as I think it is) to maintain that world A is perfect, world A can still be considered the best possible world in the sense that it is the best created world that can logically exist at any given moment. Namely, even though world A at s is better than world A at t, the latter is still the best possible world that could exist at t, even though it is not perfect.

But let us suppose that we cannot even justifiably say that world A is the best possible world. It is indisputable that, at any moment in time, world A is better than our actual world (call it world B).

The differences between world A and world B are tremendous in favor of the preferability of the former. World B contains vast quantities of excruciating evil, both moral (like rape, murder, robbery, war, etc.) and natural (like earthquakes, tsunamis, birth defects, diseases, etc.). Billions of world B's inhabitants never had a theistic belief and consequently never gave God his due by thanking, loving, and worshipping him. The assertion that our actual world, world B, is the best possible one seems so far-fetched that it was sometimes justifiably ridiculed. Therefore, even if world A were neither perfect nor the best possible world, it would indisputably be vastly superior to world B regardless of the number of gods that it contains at any moment in time. Thus, if the perfect God of classical theism were to exist, he should definitely prefer world A to world B.

Moreover, God would not bring into existence both world A and world B. First, the sum of world A and world B (call it world C) would be inferior to world A. Indeed, despite the pleasant existence in world A, world C would also contain evil, ugliness, and nonbelief, since they are present in world B. Second, it would be grossly unfair to create, on one hand, god-like creatures who are guaranteed to enjoy their existence to the highest degree possible for all eternity, and on the other hand, beings who are prone to endure considerable suffering and may even risk eternal postmortem suffering to the highest degree possible in Hell. To avoid this unfairness, God would have to choose between either A or B.

For these reasons, I conclude that God would have every reason to (1) prefer world A over world B and (2) never create anything other than world A. Therefore, AEND's first premise is vindicated.

Comments on AEND

AEND is a version of what can be called the argument from imperfection, whose general form can be formalized as follows:

Were the (perfect) God of theism to exist, then the only world that he would create (and permit to exist) would be a perfect world.

The existing world is not a perfect world.

Therefore, the God of theism does not exist. (from 1 and 2 by modus tollens)

As such, AEND is simply a refinement of what has been done before in atheistic reasoning, one where the idea of "a perfect world" is spelled out in greater detail.

AEND's importance lies in its description of a logically possible world that, on the assumption that God exists, is much more reasonable, plausible, and intuitive than the existing world. Put differently, world A is exactly the kind of world that we would expect to exist if God had existed. God is seen as a generous and perfect creator, so we should expect him to give his creatures his attributes to the highest extent possible. He wants as many of his creatures as possible to be infinitely happy, which does happen to the fullest extent possible in world A. God also wants his beings to have genuine free will as well as do no moral evil. This he accomplishes by actualizing world A. He also wants all of his beings to freely love him maximally, which he also accomplishes completely by actualizing world A.

On the other hand, world B is not even close to what we would expect a perfect God to actualize. World B's inhabitants are far from perfect: not only are they cognitively, morally, and physically limited, but there are serious imperfections in the way that their bodies function.[8] Billions of human beings not only lack infinite happiness, but their existence can be accurately characterized at most as a decent balance between happiness and unhappiness, when they are not downright miserable. Although there might be genuine free will in world B, there is also a vast quantity of moral evil, to say nothing of the massive amounts of suffering brought about by natural disasters. A large part of world B's populace has never had a theistic belief and, as a consequence, has never worshipped and maximally loved God.

In light of these facts, it is indeed reasonable to think that if world A is logically possible and God is a perfect creator, then he shouldn't instantiate world B instead of world A.

To be sure, the practice of imagining possible worlds in order to maintain that ours could have been improved is not new. For example, John L. Mackie argued that the existence of God is logically incompatible with the existence of evil, as there is a possible world that God could have created where agents always freely choose the good. As he puts it:

If God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? If there is no logical impossibility in a man's freely choosing the good on one, or on several occasions, there cannot be a logical impossibility in his freely choosing the good on every occasion. God was not, then, faced with a choice between making innocent automata and making beings who, in acting freely, would sometimes go wrong; there was open to him the obviously better possibility of making beings who would act freely but always go right.[9]

However, Mackie's use of 'beings' is unclear and confusing. What kind of being is Mackie referring to when he talks of "beings who would act freely but always go right"? Is he referring to human beings, as the beginning of the quotation suggests? Or to metaphysically superior beings like gods? Alvin Plantinga, the most celebrated critic of Mackie's argument, apparently takes 'beings' to refer to human beings, for in his God, Freedom, and Evil (1977) Plantinga rejects Mackie's argument by considering the hypothetical case of a human being—Boston mayor Curley Smith. Plantinga's concept of 'transworld depravity' also suggests that he has human beings in mind. According to Plantinga, an agent suffers from transworld depravity if in any possible world in which he is

created, he freely performs at least one morally reprehensible act. Thus, he argues, it is possible that not even God can actualize a world that contains free beings that never do evil.

However, if we substituted "men" with "gods" in Mackie's argument, Plantinga's response would fail. For we know that human beings are fallible creatures who are bound to choose to commit a morally wrong act at least once. Thus, it seems possible that human beings indeed suffer from transworld depravity. But—and this where AEND becomes relevant—the same cannot be said about morally perfect, omniscient, perfectly rational, and completely free beings like gods. No traditional theist could claim that God suffers from transworld depravity, because then he would not be perfect. The gods in world A could not suffer from transworld depravity, either, for they are also morally perfect, omniscient, perfectly rational, and completely free beings. AEND shows that, contra Plantinga, there is a world—world A—in which free agents always choose what is ethically required. Therefore, it is possible that God, being omnipotent, could create a world with free creatures that never choose evil.

Other philosophers argue that God could have improved the actual world by creating human beings with greater intelligence or a tendency to do what is morally required.[10] Others still argue that a world where human beings do not have free will could be superior to our world.[11] But why suppose that if God exists, he would create human beings to begin with? AEND challenges this hidden assumption, maintaining that we should expect God to create no less than other gods. So the very existence of human beings is in itself a proof against theism.

AEND greatly raises the standard to which a world created by a perfect god must conform. If world A is absolutely free of evil, nonbelief, and ugliness, then any existing world that contains these even to the slightest degree can be considered a proof of God's nonexistence. To underscore the point, consider what Theodore M. Drange says about world B: "It would not do to say that God should simply eliminate all suffering for there is definitely some suffering that makes the world better than it would otherwise be. Many examples could be cited here, but it would suffice to point out that some suffering is needed just for the sake of contrast. Otherwise, people's lives would be too bland to be enjoyable."[12] But AEND shows that there is no need for even such a small amount of evil. Just as God does not need evil in order to avoid boredom or blandness, in world A there is no need for any kind of contrast that evil could bring about. So we should not expect there to be any quantity of evil in God's created world.

The same can be said with respect to nonbelief. Since in world A there is not even one nontheist, it follows that an existing world that contains one nonbeliever is not created by God. Thus, such an existing world is a proof that God doesn't exist because if he would exist, he would not actualize it instead of world A.

AEND proves that a world created by God also should not include any instances of aesthetic ugliness, as our world does include. AEND also strengthens the argument from confusion, which argues that God does not exist from the disagreements between theists about crucial doctrinal matters. Since in world A there is no disagreement between agents whatsoever, it follows that a world which contains even the slightest disagreement—on religious matters or anything else—shows that God doesn't exist.

In short, AEND provides serious support for a whole range of atheistic arguments, demonstrating that a world created by God would not contain even the slightest of the deficiencies just considered.

Objections to AEND and Responses

Objection 1 (O1): AEND's first premise states that God would create only a world containing exclusively a multitude of gods (what we have called world A). But this is not clearly so, because there are certain goods that do not exist in world A. Some examples of these goods include intellectual curiosity (the kind of curiosity that motivates us to want to learn more about the world), discipline, the power to resist temptation, compassion, perseverance, and courage. Thus, it is not clear that world A is better than B, so it is not clear whether God would indeed choose A over B.

Response: The goods enumerated above are not intrinsically valuable. They are good only if there exist certain difficulties or shortcomings that need to be overridden by possessing these goods. Since in world A there aren't any difficulties or shortcomings that need to be surpassed, it follows that their absence in world A does nothing to detract from its desirability over world B.

Consider curiosity and discipline. As I argue elsewhere, "curiosity and discipline are not good things in themselves. For the most part they are important when we are ignorant because they give us the determination to learn more and to learn more effectively. If we already knew (to a high degree) everything that is useful to us, then curiosity and discipline would largely be unnecessary."[13] Not even learning should be viewed as being intrinsically good. It is only knowledge that is valuable in itself. Learning is good in world B because it is the only way its denizens can gain knowledge. But in world A there is no need for learning because all of its beings are omniscient and so already know all that there is to know. Consider compassion. It too is not a good thing in itself. We should be compassionate only if and when there exists suffering that needs to be alleviated. But it would be better if there didn't exist any type of suffering that calls for compassion. The absence of any suffering in world A is preferable to the intense and widespread suffering found in world B. Therefore, even though all of A's inhabitants are morally perfect and supremely compassionate, compassion doesn't exist simply because it is not needed. Since a world without suffering is preferable to a world that contains it, a world where compassion is not needed is preferable to a world where it is needed.

Nicholas Everitt makes a similar point with respect to the virtuous power to resist temptation: "Given that human beings are liable to temptation, it is good that they have to some degree the power to resist temptation. The second property helps, as it were, to counteract the effect of the first. But the counteracting is not so valuable that it is better that both should be instantiated than that neither should be."[15]

Perseverance is steady persistence in spite of difficulties, obstacles, or discouragement. It is useful to be perseverant in world B, where difficulties and obstacles abound, but it would be completely useless in world A, where there are no difficulties or obstacles of any kind.

Thus, the absence of things from world A like compassion, courage, the power to resist temptation, perseverance, and the desire to learn does not signal a problem or an imperfection in A which

might determine God to choose A over B. On the contrary, their existence in world B is an indication of B's imperfection.

But perhaps, a critic might protest, in actualizing world A God would make supreme happiness (which consists in possessing all of God's attributes and being in the presence of God and other gods) too easy to acquire, and such an important goal should be earned through serious effort. However, it should first be remembered that the god-like beings in world A are completely free, just as God is. If God's actions could not carry any moral significance, they could never be praiseworthy. But this consequence is obviously rejected by theists. Therefore, if God's actions carry moral significance, then the other gods' actions likewise carry moral significance.

Ralph Wagenet describes God's freedom as follows:

[God is] not bound by inappropriate or involuntary restraint. This is not the same as the absence of all restraint. Clearly it is no slavery to be bound by restraints that you yourself have chosen and embraced, that are consistent with who you are and what you desire. The opposite of freedom is compulsion; being bound to act inconsistently with your conscience and values. God is absolutely free, for no one and nothing can bind him to an action he finds repugnant.[16]

All of the god-like beings in world A possess exactly the same kind of absolute freedom. Since they are omniscient, morally perfect, and perfectly rational, they will freely choose to do what is right and abstain from doing evil. If God is absolutely free, and thus his freedom is relevant and significant, so is the freedom possessed by the beings in world A. Therefore, their choices, like loving and worshipping God and loving all of the other beings in world A, are relevant and not determined by anything outside of them. So in a very important sense, they certainly deserve their blissful existence since they themselves freely made all of the right choices.

But it is here that the critic might retort that their omniscience and perfect moral character is what made their choice a lot easier. Acquiring so much knowledge, the critic might argue, should require a lot of hard work. Such valuable goods should not simply be given away. But this argument assumes that learning is a goal in itself, an intrinsic good rather than merely a means to the end of knowledge itself—an argument that has already been rejected above.

It is certainly true that in our world, world B, most significant goods can be attained exclusively by hard work. But as I have already said, that is only because ours is an imperfect world, filled with obstacles stemming from its imperfection and all kinds of difficulties that need to be overcome. This objection is based on how things are in our world, not on how things should be in the best possible world.

Why does the critic think that becoming more knowledgeable should require hard work? All things being equal, it is the knowledge that matters, not how it was acquired. It is worth mentioning here that AEND also receives some biblical support against O1. In Ezekiel 28:12 we are informed that God created Lucifer "full of wisdom." Since wisdom is defined as knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action, it follows that there is nothing wrong from God's point of view with giving a high degree of knowledge to one of his creatures. Why should giving perfect knowledge to his beings be undesirable?[17]

Objection 2 (O2): Robert M. Adams challenges the assumption that if a perfectly good moral agent created any world at all, it would have to be the very best world that he could create. By employing the concept of divine "grace," which is considered a virtue in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Adams argues that even if there is a best of all possible worlds, the fact that God chooses to create a less than perfect world does not show a moral defect on his part. That is because God would still love the creatures in the less than perfect world due to his grace, which is defined as "a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved."[18]Therefore, if Adams is right, then AEND's first premise fails because it would not be true that God would create exclusively a world that contains a multitude of gods.

Response: William Hasker has pointed out that even if choosing to create an inferior world does not indicate a moral flaw on God's part, God would still have good reasons to prefer creating the best possible world:

Unlike Adams, I believe that if we grant the existence of a best world, we will be hard pressed to make sense of the notion that God might create some other world instead. The problem is not that God is obligated to create the best world.... But I think it will be very difficult to make such a choice on God's part rationally intelligible: what possible reason could God have for creating an inferior world instead of the best?.... [T]he concept of grace provides no reason why God would choose to create less than perfect. As Mark Thomas has pointed out, the notion of grace is neutral with regard to which world God creates; it does not provide a reason for which God might create some world other than the best possible.[19]

William Rowe drives this point home when he writes:

Loving parents may be disposed to love fully any child that is born to them, regardless of whatever talents that child is capable of developing. But such love is consistent with a preference for a child who will be born whole, without mental or physical impairment, a child who will develop his or her capacities for kindness toward others, who will develop his or her tastes for music, good literature, etc. And in like manner, God will graciously love any creature he might choose to create, not just the best possible creatures. But that does not rule out God's having a preference for creating creatures who will strive as creatures not only to have a good life but also to lead a good life, creatures who will in their own way freely develop themselves into "children of God."[20]

Returning to AEND, even if God would graciously love any kind of created beings, he would still have compelling reasons to create only gods, as AEND's first premise states. Just as loving parents would prefer to have a healthy child instead of a mentally deficient one, even though they would love fully any of the two children born to them, so God would prefer to actualize world A instead of world B, even though he would also love the beings in world B were they to exist. Thus, the concept of grace introduced by Adams does nothing to show the falsity of AEND's premise (1).

Though this is sufficient to reject Adams' argument, it is interesting to note that in the Judeo-Christian tradition God is said to have actually regretted the creation of world B at one point. Genesis 6:5-6 states: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." Not even his divine grace was

capable of making him love his creatures, since in the next verse we find out that he destroyed them: "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." Since it is reasonable to believe that God would want to avoid such disappointing situations, he would want from the start to actualize world A, whose denizens will never disappoint him, instead of experimenting by actualizing other possible worlds.

Objection 3 (O3): God did in fact create a perfect world. According to Genesis 1:31, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Moreover, in Genesis 1:27 we read: "So God created man in his own image." However, this flawless world "fell" because one of its free beings chose to disobey God. Thus, AEND's conclusion does not follow from its premises because there is no real conflict between the two premises. Since God is not responsible for the actualization of world B, it follows that AEND's premise (2) does not contradict in any way premise (1).

Response: The obvious reply is that no matter how good the world created by God was, it was certainly not perfect. A perfect world must by definition remain perfect. A "perfect" world that has the capacity to become imperfect is not perfect in the first place. Even if the first pair was created without sin, Adam and Eve were surely vastly different from the gods that I've argued God would create. For example, if Eve would have been omniscient and morally perfect, she would have known that the talking serpent is the Devil and wants to harm and trick her, and she wouldn't have eaten the forbidden fruit. In fact, since the apple she ate was from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, it follows that she didn't even know the basic difference between good and evil before she ate it. Thus, it is obvious that she was not omniscient. Therefore, it cannot be argued that the human beings created by God in the Genesis story were perfect. On the contrary, they were extremely deficient at least from an epistemic point of view.

Michael Martin underlines the differences between God and human beings as follows: "[I]n what specific respects God was supposed to make humans in His image is not clear. After all, in many respects humans are not created in God's image: God has no body, humans do; God cannot sin, humans can and do; God is infinitely strong, humans are weak; and so on."[21]

In fact, if God would choose to create a being in his image, this being would probably be like a god, as argued in defense of AEND's first premise; that is, it would be a being that does not have a body, cannot sin, is infinitely strong, and so on. Thus, Genesis 1:27 seems to enforce AEND rather than O3.

Objection 4 (O4): In Exodus 20:4-6 we read: "You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but I showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." Doesn't it follow that since God is "jealous" of other gods, he would not want to create other gods?

Response: The verses above are usually interpreted as a divine prohibition on making idols and worshiping those idols instead of God. God is not somehow envious of other gods or idols. That would be a character flaw incompatible with his moral perfection. Instead of his children loving nonexistent idols and gods, the moral of the story is that God wanted his children to love and appreciate their true creator. And that is exactly what would happen in world A: every inhabitant of world A would love and appreciate God and would never be so deluded as to love nonexistent idols and gods.

But perhaps the message here is that if God were to create another being of equal power, intelligence, and perfection, then he would cease to be unique. But even in world A there is at least one crucial thing that does make God unique among all of the other gods: he is the creator of all of the others. In addition, if we agree that God is, by definition, necessarily existent, then he is also the only god whose existence is necessary. And since they are omniscient and morally perfect, the created gods would know this and recognize God for what he is.

Objection 5 (O5): God has a good but unknown reason to prefer world B over world A, but our limited minds cannot understand his reasons.

Response: If God is morally perfect, then he would choose world B over world A only if he could achieve an even better result than world A. But world A already contains everything that God could want from his creatures, since there exists supreme happiness, complete love and harmony among its denizens, no evil or suffering, and freely chosen love and worship of God by all of his creatures. Not even Heaven—where believers expect to find supreme and eternal happiness, to love "the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind," and to love "their neighbor as themselves"—offers anything more than what is already found in world A. However, in world A every personal being is guaranteed infinite happiness, and none of them experience any suffering, not even for a limited amount of time (unlike the denizens of world B). Thus, world A is superior to world B even if world B includes a place of eternal postmortem happiness for some of its denizens. Therefore, it is irrational to believe that there could by some possible unknown reason for God to prefer world B over world A.

Conclusion

I have argued that were the traditional theistic God to exist, the present world would not exist. For God would only choose to actualize a world containing other gods who possess every one of his attributes except necessary existence—a world I have called world A. And since there is nothing logically impossible about world A, it could be actualized by an omnipotent God. Were God to decide to create a world that includes other personal beings, world A is what we would expect him to actualize. For there is nothing that a perfect God wants that our present world has but that world A lacks. The only things utterly absent from world A are the numerous negative aspects of our actual world, like suffering and nonbelief. Thus, God should be motivated to actualize exclusively world A. Since a world other than world A clearly exists, it follows that the God of traditional theism does not.[22]

A Disproof of God's Existence (1970) by Michael Martin

In this paper I present a disproof of the existence of God. Such a disproof does not disprove the existence of God in all senses of the ambiguous term 'God.' But no disproof does this. For instance what one might call the disproof of God's existence from the problem of evil, even if sound, presumably does not show that God does not exist if 'God' is meant to refer to some being that either is not omnipotent or not completely benevolent. Again, the so called ontological Disproof of God, even if sound, does not show that God does not exist if 'God' is meant to refer to some being that is less than perfect.

In order to tell what the relevance of such disproofs have to ordinary people's belief in God one must discern what the ordinary concept of God is. But this is sometimes difficult. We have a good idea what professional philosaphers and theologians mean by 'God' but what the theologically and philosophically unsophisticated mean by 'God' is often not so clear. For instance, it is not so obvious to me that most people in our culture who believe in God believe that God is a Perfect Being. One suspects that many religious believers have a more limited or modest view of God. If this is so, the above mentioned disproofs of the existence of God, even if sound, could hardly touch many people's religious convictions.

My disproof of the exisrence of God does, I believe, refute a belief in God that is based on a common concept of God, a notion of God that many people hold--although I am willing to admit that this God may not be the God of professional philosophers or theologicians. (The concept of God presumed in my disproof is not a Perfect Being and differs from the standard academic notion in other ways). Thus I will argue that 'God' in one sense that is widely accepted in non-academic circles is self contradictory and thus that God in this sense cannot exist. I will first give a rather informal exposition of the disproof, then I will give a more formal version. Finally, I will defend the disproof against possible objections.

Informal Statement of the Disproof

The ordinary man seems to believe that God is the most moral being in the universe. (Whether he believes that God is morally perfect we need not decide). Part of this belief of the ordinary man is that God does not have certain kinds of feelings. Although God may have the feeling of anger, God does not have the feelings of lust or envy. Moreover, part of this ordinary concept of God is that God knows more than anyone else. (Again whether the ordinary man believes that God knows everything we leave as an open question). In particular the ordinary man supposes that God knows (at least) all that men know. However these two beliefs, once correctly understood, are logically incompatible. Let me explain.

Philosophers in talking about God's knowledge almost invariably equate God's knowledge with what has been called propositional knowledge or knowledge that something is the case. This intellectual view of God does not seem to be shared by the common man. On his view God's knowledge includes other types of knowledge as well. The plain man certainly supposes that God knows how to do many things and he does not mean by this that God knows that certain things should be done in such and such a way; he believes that God has certain skills (procedural knowledge) i.e. at least all those skills that men have.

Moreover, it is not obvious that ordinary people suppose that man's or God's knowledge is exhausted by knowledge that and knowledge how. There is a use of 'know' in ordinary parlance which cannot be reduced to knowledge that or knowledge how. When one says "I. know Smith" one does not ordinarily mean merely that one has certain propositional or procedural knowledge concerning Smith. Usually what is at least suggested is that one has met Smith. In other expressions of the form "Person P know X" the meaning is changed only slightly. When one says "Jones knows sorrow" one does not usually mean only that Jones knows that sorrow results in such and such behavior or that sorrow is caused in such and such a way. One is usually suggesting rather that Jones has had the experience of sorrow. The same thing goes for the expression "He has known lust" or "He has known envy." A person who knows lust and envy has at least had the feeling of lust or envy. Since God has all of men's knowledge and more, he must know lust and envy. But to say God has known lust and envy is to say that God has had the feelings of lust and envy. But this is incompatible with God's moral goodness. Hence God does not exist.

FORMAL PROOF

Premise (1)

If God exists, God has not had the feelings of lust or envy.

Premise (2)

If God exists, God exists as a being who knows at least everything man knows.

Premise (3)

If God exists as a being who knows at least everything man knows, God knows lust and envy.

Premise (4)

If God knows lust and envy, God has had the feelings of lust and envy.

(5) God exists.

By hypothesis.

(6) .: God has had and has not had the feelings of lust and envy.

By (1) - (5).

(7) God does not exist.

By (5) & (6)

Q. E. D.

OBJECTIONS TO THE DISPROOF

Objection (1)

God's moral goodness does not concern His feelings; rather they concern His action and the principle of His action. Thus premise (1) is false.

Answer:

Now it is true that sometimes in judging the moral quality of a person one takes account only of his action and the principle of his action. A person who did good deeds all of his life and who acted on moral principles would normally be considered a good person. But still we would consider such a person better if there were not envy or lust in his heart. In any case, it is inconceivable to the ordinary religious believer that God's good action and purpose should hide His feelings of lust and envy. People demand that in God at least--who is their moral Ideal--the feelings of lust and envy should not exist.

Objection (2)

If God had the feelings of lust and envy and this affected Him, this would indeed detract from his moral goodness. However, God because of His great powers need not let these feelings affect Him. Thus premise (1) is false.

Answer:

It is difficult to know what 'affect Him' means here. Envy and lust are feelings that must affect the person that has them. One need not succumb to such feelings to be affected by them. By definition they do have some effect, i.e. these feelings involve certain strivings in the person that has them. Just because God may never be overcome by these feelings is not enough. The mere fact that He has had them would take away from His moral goodness on the common view.

Moreover, unless God sometimes did succumb to envy or lust this would detract from His knowledge and He would know less than some men. To say Jones has known succumbing to lust is presumably to say that Jones once experienced this succumbing himself, i.e. he once succumbed. If God lacked this knowledge, He would know less than Jones in one respect at least.

Objection (3)

God's knowledge is only propositional knowledge. Thus premise (3) is false.

Answer:

This argument seems to me to be mistaken at least as far as a common view of God goes. Indeed, I would argue that the more personal a view of God one has--and most ordinary people have a very personal view of God--the more mistaken this retort is. People who tend to think of God as a person naturally tend to think of Him as having many characteristics of persons and this includes the sort of knowledge that persons have. And this knowledge includes more than propositional knowledge.

Objection (4)

Since God is all powerful he can know lust and envy without having the feelings of envy and greed. Thus premise (4) is false.

Answer:

As I have already mentioned I am skeptical that philosophers have adequately characterized the ordinary notion of God and thus I am not sure that omnipotence is a property that most people

predicate of God. But, in any case, as I understand the expression "He has known lust" it would be logically impossible for God to have known lust and not have had the feeling of lust. Presumably, even on the academic notion of God, God cannot do what is logically impossible.

Objection (5)

Your argument is in fact a very ancient and well worn objection and neglects the classical replies that have been made to it. Thus your argument is without merit.

Answer:

It is true that an argument similar to mine is found in classical literature. The classical reply to such an argument was usually to point out that God's knowledge of lust and envy need not involve having these feelings. This answer is sufficient in the classical context to refute the argument since the traditional philosophical and theological intellectual notion of God was at issue. In this context only propositional knowledge was relevant. But in the present context such an answer is not sufficient since this traditional philosophical and theological notion of God is not under consideration. We are considering the existence of God of the ordinary man. Here the ordinary sense of 'know' is relevant. And in one ordinary sense of 'know' one does not know lust or envy unless one has experienced lust and envy. Thus my disproof is not in fact an ancient and well worn objection that neglects the classical replies.

Objection (6)

This argument, even if sound, refutes the belief in God of the unsophisticated person. But it is hardly surprising that such a person's view of God is inconsistent and that God in this cense dees not exist. Hence, this argument is philosophically uninteresting.

Answer:

1 have refuted a belief in God held by many philosophically unsophisticated people and this view of God may not correspond very well to what philosophers have meant by God. Nevertheless, this does not take away from the interest of the disproof. First of all, it may not be surprising that a common view of God is false. But that such a view is logically false is surely surprising--just as surprising as if one showed that people's ordinary view of morality or space was inconsistent. (One does not suppose these concepts are self contradictory in ordinary thinking although one may suppose they are unclear, ambiguous, and confused). Secondly, it seems to me that part of a philosopher's job (but surely not all) is to analyze and critically evaluate the views of people who are not philosophically sophisticated. This fact has been recognized at least since Socrates. Thus my disproof of God in the ordinary sense of 'God' does have some philosophical interest.

Objection (7)

There is no reason to suppose your analysis of God captures the ordinary sense of 'God' in our culture. In order to determine this sociological and anthropological evidence of a certain kind would be necessary. Since you do not produce such evidence one can well remain skeptical of your disproof of ordinary people's belief in God.

Answer:

It is true that I have not appealed to sociological or anthropological evidence to justify my thesis. No such evidence is available at the present time. The evidence that is available to me does suggest that I am correct. More reliable evidence when it is produced may change my mind. Meanwhile, one can at least evaluate the disproof hypothetically. One can ask: if this concept of God is the one implicit in ordinary thinking, is it true that God as is ordinarily conceived does not exist? The answer, as I have tried to show, is yes.

Positive Atheism and the Meaninglessness of Theism (1999) by Michael Martin

In Part I of Atheism: A Philosophical Justification I argued that sentences about the existence of God are factually meaningless, hence, they are neither true nor false. However, in Part II of this book I maintained that if the sentences about God are not factually meaningless, "God exists" is false. Readers of my book--both theists and atheists--have been puzzled. Indeed, some critics have maintained that I have contradicted myself and the basic argument of my book is incoherent.

However, my position is not incoherent although perhaps more clarification is needed. In this paper I defend my position by offering a clarification of what I meant.

The General Structure of The Argument and The Fall-Back Position

Critics have been puzzled about my advocating both the factual meaninglessness of theism and the truth of positive atheism, that is, the view that God does not exist. How can I advocate both? Arguing that both "God exists" and "God does not exist" are factually meaningless seems incompatible with maintaining that "God does not exist" is true.

First of all, in order to understand why there is no incompatibility it is important to understand the general structure of my argument that atheism is justified. The argument can be stated in this way:[1]

1. Either "God exists" is factually meaningless or "God exists" is factually meaningful.

2. If "God exists" is factually meaningless, then it is neither true nor false; hence belief in God is unjustified.

3. If "God exists" is factually meaningful, then it is either true or false; but (given the arguments in Parts I and II of my book) one is justified in disbelieving that God exists.

Therefore,

4. Either belief in God is unjustified or disbelief in God is justified.

Therefore, given the definitions of negative and positive atheism,

5. Either negative atheism or positive atheism is justified.

Therefore,

6. Atheism is justified.

Furthermore, in order to understand that there is no incompatibility between Chapter 2 and Part II it is important to see that my defense of the position in Part II of the book is a fall-back or backup position. Although I argued in Chapter 2 that a case can be made for supposing that theism is factually meaningless, I realized that such a case is not strong and that a backup position is needed. I maintained that the case for the factual meaninglessness of religious statements is not strong because a commonly accepted and fully developed theory of meaning is not yet available. Until such a theory is developed we must rest content with a partial theory of meaning and a partial justification of the meaninglessness of religious discourse. I maintained that this consideration tells strongly against negative atheists relying exclusively on the verifiability theory to support their case. In addition, I argued that since even this partial justification could be undermined, atheists who use the verifiability theory to support their view would be prudent to have a backup position.

I went on to say in Chapter 2 that for these reasons I would not assume in the remainder of my book that the sentences "God exists" and "God does not exist" are factually meaningless. I said that I would act as if talk about God is factually meaningful and develop the case for negative atheism on independent grounds. I asserted that in the remaining chapters of Atheism I would assume that the sentences "God existed" and "God does not exist" are factually meaningful.[2]

Puzzlement From Readers

My position concerning the meaninglessness of theism in Atheism has puzzled some readers. Professor John Keller in a review of Atheism in Faith and Philosophy saw "a perplexing implication" of my position: if I am correct in the first part of the book, the second part of the book is meaningless. Keller complained: "So it is difficult to avoid wondering whether [Martin] believes the argument [from meaninglessness] is correct. If he does, then what does he think he is doing in the remaining 80% of the book; if he does not, why include it."[3] He also claimed that I did not indicate what I took to be the relative strength of my arguments.

Keller's comments betray a misunderstanding concerning the structure of my argument and a failure to appreciate my strategy of using positive atheism as a fall-back position. The only way I can understand his perplexity is that he mistakenly interprets me to be making two categorical claims about the sentence "God does not exist (p)":

(a) p is neither true nor false.

(b) p is true.

If fact, however, I am making one categorical claim--albeit tentatively--and another hypothetical claim:

(a) p is neither true nor false

(c) If p is either true or false, then p is true.

Keller is also mistaken in saying that I did not indicate the relative strength of my arguments. I would have thought it rather clear from what I said on p. 77 of Atheism that I regarded the

meaningless argument as subject to more doubts than other arguments and that it was therefore unwise for atheists to rest their case solely on it. [4]

Dr. Keith Burgess-Jackson in an e-mail letter to me dated September 13, 1996 maintained that he had no problem with the argumentative strategy of Atheism but wondered what position I really held in contrast to the position I took for the purposes of the argument. He said that if I really believe that "God exists" is factually meaningless, then I cannot be and should not claim to be a positive atheist.

Unlike Keller, Burgess-Jackson understood what my argumentative strategy was. What perhaps he did fully understand, however, is that positive atheism is a fall-back position and that I did not intend it categorically. My position is something like this. Yes, "God exists" is probably meaningless. But I am not completely sure. If I am wrong, there is still no reason to believe in God (negative atheism) and good reason not to (positive atheism). So my argumentative strategy reflects to some extent my actual belief. I would believe that God does not exist if "God exists" is not meaningless (which it may not be). [5]

Professor Theodore Drange, an atheist, in his excellent unpublished work Nonbelief and Evil writes:

I understand and sympathize with Martin's appeal to a backup (or 'fall-back') position. . . .

However, the use of atheism as a backup position for religious noncognitivism strikes me as less legitimate than any of my maneuvers since noncognitivism declares atheism to be flat-out meaningless. Martin says he agrees with the view that "God does not exist" is meaningless in the sense of being neither true nor false. But then he says in the rest of his book he will disregard that and proceed as though the sentences were meaningful. How can a meaningless sentence be treated as meaningful? That is, how can a sentence which cannot be used in arguments be used in arguments? Some further clarification is needed.

One thing that Martin could have done to make his position clearer would have been to take a more neutral stand on the issue of whether or not the sentence 'God does not exist' is meaningful. He could have said that he 'leaned towards' the view that the sentence is meaningless but had not yet made up his mind on his matter. [6]

There seems to me to be a close similarity between what Drange says I could have done and what I did do. Although I did not say that I leaned toward the view that the sentence "God does not exist" is meaningless, I certainly made plain why I thought the meaninglessness claim was not fully justified and that in order to justify it fully more argument would be needed. There may not be much difference between:

(d) I lean toward position P.

(e) I hold position P but not very strongly.

However, that point aside, it is not clear to me why I could not have a strong belief that sentences about God are meaningless and yet for the sake of the argument suppose they are meaningful. We can believe strongly that a statement is false yet, for the sake of the argument, suppose it is true. It

is unclear why a similar hypothetical position cannot be entertained with respect to meaningless sentences. Suppose we read in a faculty handbook that all members of the faculty will wear academic gowns at graduation. One might believe strongly that this is a command and reject it as being inappropriate. However, since commands lack truth value they are meaningless in the sense of lacking truth value. But one might also suppose, for the sake of the argument that what one has read is a prediction and, on this supposition, reject it as being false.[7]

In an e-mail letter dated September 19, 1996 Drange drew a distinction between sentences that lack both truth value and meaning and sentences that just lack truth value. He maintained that my example of "All faculty will wear academic gowns (S1)" taken as a command lacks truth value but not meaning. He admitted that one could treat S1 as true even though one believed that it lacks truth value but he contrasted S1 with sentences that lack both truth value and meaning such as "GJB is a trodeliptic granfy (S2)." Unlike S1, S2 cannot be treated as true.

Drange may be correct that the term "meaningless" is misleading in this context of religious language. Nevertheless, by a meaningless sentence I meant lacking in truth value. Thus on page 42 I defined literal meaning as: "A statement has cognitive or literal meaning if and only if it is either true or false." Moreover, in Atheism I made a distinction between the meaninglessness of sentences like S2 and statements about God. Indeed, I explicitly distinguished the meaninglessness of sentences such as:

(1) God has no body and yet acts in the world.

from the meaningless of sentences such as:

(2) God is gluberfied.

(3) God big impossible.

(4) Goo Foo is gluberfied.

As I said on page 45, "Terms such as 'God, "has a body', 'acts', 'in the world', unlike 'Goo Foo' and 'is gluberfied', have uses in our language." Moreover, I pointed out that in contrast to (3) (1) has no syntactical irregularities. In addition, "God" has a fixed syntax making possible certain logical inferences from (1). Of course, when I said in Chapter 2 that, although a case can be made that statements of religion are meaningless, in the rest of the book I will suppose they are not meaningless, I meant sentences like (1) and not (2) or (3).

Perhaps a key difference between Drange and me on the meaninglessness of religious sentences is this.[8] He believes that to call sentences like

(5) Close the door!

and (1) meaningless on the grounds that they lack truth value is a mistake whereas I do not. However, I am happy to concede Drange's point for it does not affect my views in any significant way. Religious sentences like (1) would still lack truth value and be noncognitive.

A criticism similar to the ones outlined above was raised by Greg Bahnsen in a taped lecture.[9] Bahnsen claimed that my position that religious statements are meaningless is in conflict with my

defence of positive atheism. He said that I cannot "have it both ways": I cannot defend the factual meaninglessness of theism as well as the falsehood of theism. Indeed, Bahnsen argued that if my argument is correct in Chapter 2, I should not have written the rest of the book.

My answer to Bahnsen is similar to the answers given above. Bahnsen does not seem to understand the structure of the argument of my book and failed to understand that positive atheism is a backup position. For this reason he seemed to confuse the logically unacceptable position of holding both (a) and (b) and the logically acceptable position of holding (a) and (c).

Conclusion

I hope that the comments provided here eliminate the perplexity of readers of Atheism: A Philosophical Justification and allay suspicion that there is an inconsistency between my thesis that religious language is meaningless and my defense of positive atheism.

The Transcendental Argument for the Nonexistence of God by Michael Martin

Some Christian philosophers have made the incredible argument that logic, science and morality presuppose the truth of the Christian world view because logic, science and morality depend on the truth of this world view [1]. Advocates call this argument the Transcendental Argument for Existence of God and I will call it TAG for short. In what follows I will not attempt to refute TAG directly. Rather I will show how one can argue exactly the opposite conclusion, namely, that logic, science and morality presuppose the falsehood of the Christian world view or at least the falsehood of the interpretation of his world view presupposed by TAG. I will call this argument the Transcendental Argument for the Nonexistence of God or TANG for short.

If TANG is a sound argument, then obviously TAG is not, for it is logically impossible that there be two sound arguments with contradictory conclusions. On the other hand, if TANG is unsound, it does not follow that TAG is sound. After all, both arguments could be unsound. Perhaps, logic, science, and objective morality are possible given either a Christian or a nonChristian world view. In any case, the presentation of TANG will provide an indirect challenge to TAG and force its advocates to defend their position. The burden will be on them to refute TANG. Unless they do, TAG is doomed.

How might TANG proceed? Consider logic. Logic presupposes that its principles are necessarily true. However, according to the brand of Christianity assumed by TAG, God created everything, including logic; or at least everything, including logic, is dependent on God. But if something is created by or is dependent on God, it is not necessary--it is contingent on God. And if principles of logic are contingent on God, they are not logically necessary. Moreover, if principles of logic are contingent on God, God could change them. Thus, God could make the law of noncontradiction false; in other words, God could arrange matters so that a proposition and its negation were true at the same time. But this is absurd. How could God arrange matters so that New Zealand is south of China and that New Zealand is not south of it? So, one must conclude that logic is not dependent on God, and, insofar as the Christian world view assumes that logic so dependent, it is false.

Consider science. It presupposes the uniformity of nature: that natural laws govern the world and that there are no violations of such laws. However, Christianity presupposes that there are miracles in which natural laws are violated. Since to make sense of science one must assume that there are no miracles, one must further assume that Christianity is false. To put this in a different way: Miracles by definition are violations of laws of nature that can only be explained by God's intervention. Yet science assumes that insofar as an event as an explanation at all, it has a scientific explanation--one that does not presuppose God [2]. Thus, doing, science assumes that the Christian world view is false.

Consider morality. The type of Christian morality assumed by TAG is some version of the Divine Command Theory, the view that moral obligation is dependent on the will of God. But such a view is incompatible with objective morality. On the one hand, on this view what is moral is a function of the arbitrary will of God; for instance, if God wills that cruelty for its own sake is good, then it is. On the other hand, determining the will of God is impossible since there are different alleged sources of this will (The Bible, the Koran, The Book of Mormon, etc) and different interpretations of what these sources say; moreover; there is no rational way to reconcile these differences. Thus, the existence of an objective morality presupposes the falsehood of the Christian world view assumed by TAG.

There are, of course, ways to avoid the conclusions of TANG. One way is to reject logic, science and objective morality. Another is to maintain belief in God but argue that logic, science and morality are not dependent on God's existence. However, the first way is self-defeating since Christian apologists use logic to defend their position and the second way presumes that TAG is invalid since it assumes that logic, science, and morality do not assume God's existence. Finally, one can object to particular aspects of TANG, for example, the claim that there is no rational way to reconcile different interpretations of the Bible. However, this tack would involve a detailed defence of TAG--something that has yet to be provided.

Evolutionary Absurdity Against Naturalism by AntiCitizenX

Apparently, there’s a lot of popular Christian apologists who think that if evolution is real, then naturalism is not. Or something. It’s actually kind of hard to tell because the argument itself is kind of weird. But let’s see if our good friend Inspiring Philosophy can explain (link)

[00:05] “When we hear of some new attempt to explain reasoning… naturalistically, we ought to react as if we were told that someone had squared the circle.” - Peter Geach

One of the most aggravating things about apologists like Inspiring Philosophy is how they can’t go more than 10 seconds without saying something incredibly dumb. For example, take this quote here. The only logical way this statement could ever be true is if the idea of naturalism somehow contradicted the idea of reason. That literally, the very proposition “Reason is a natural phenomenon” must entail some kind of logical impossibility like married bachelors or square circles. However, that cannot possibly be the case unless the definition of reason already presupposes an inherently supernatural process. So the argument hasn’t even officially begun yet and this dumb bastard is already begging the question. He is effectively declaring, in advance, that he has categorically rejected the very possibility of a natural explanation for human reason.

[00:14] “One of the age-old problems in philosophy is the problem of skepticism. How can we be certain what we experience and know is true and not an illusion or just a useful model? How do we know our knowledge is accurate and not a trick that external forces are making us believe?”

This is another one of those little things about religious apologists that always gets under my skin. What he’s saying here about skepticism isn’t exactly wrong per se, but it is being expressed in a lazy, incompetent way. For example, what does it mean for an experience to be true? Because last time I checked, truth was a property of propositions, not experiences. Trying to ask whether or not an experience is true is like trying to ask whether or not my music is colorful. It might loosely mean something to some people in some figurative context, but from a purely technical standpoint, it’s just meaningless gibberish. What he’s actually trying to ask is how we can be certain that our experiences are representative of a real, objective reality, as opposed to, say, some illusion like a matrix simulation. That is the fundamental problem of skepticism, and it’s a perfectly valid thing to be concerned about when studying epistemology. It’s just kind of hard to address such problems when you’re terrible at expressing them in the first place.

[00:30] “The usual way this is addressed is through the position of epistemic particularism, which is basically the position that our knowledge is innocent until proven guilty. There is no reason to doubt our knowledge, beliefs, and intuition unless we can find an actual reason to cause us to doubt.”

See what I mean? Read that back again. There is no reason to doubt our beliefs, unless we can find an actual reason to doubt our beliefs. Thank you so much for that brilliant insight!

Vapid tautologies aside, where exactly does IP get the idea that this is the “usual” way to address the problem of skepticism? He makes it out as if philosophers everywhere are just casually ignoring the problem altogether. The reality, of course, is that nothing could be further from the truth. Ever since the days of Rene Descartes, philosophers have all had perfectly good reasons to be quite concerned about the objectivity of sense data. That’s why every philosophical reference worth its weight in salt will openly acknowledge skepticism as a very serious problem to be dealt with.

And speaking of “epistemic particularism,” I actually had to look this term up because I never even heard of it until I watched this video. It’s a really obscure term that only gets thrown around in the odd paper or two, but doesn't represent a popular view held by any significant people. Not only that, but the definition doesn't even match what IP just said. According to his very own citation:

“... epistemological particularism is the view that there are some particular items of knowledge (or justifiable belief) that one can know (justifiably believe) without knowing how one knows them.”

- J.P. Moreland

That is not the same thing as “innocent until proven guilty.” It's as if IP is either deliberately making things up out of thin air, or he really is just that incompetent at reading comprehension.

[00:45] “What if there was a reason that could cause us to begin to doubt our beliefs? What if our beliefs led to an internal contradiction and a self-defeating circle?”

We already have a reason to doubt our beliefs. It's called skepticism. You just mentioned it 30 seconds ago. This is a well-documented problem that demonstrably manifests itself in our daily lives. We dream; we hallucinate; we misremember; we experience illusions; we have limited, fallible, subjective perspective about the external, mind-independent reality. We therefore cannot "know" any of it with absolute, perfect certainty. This is a cornerstone of all modern epistemology and philosophy of science. The train has left the station centuries ago, yet IP is here pretending like it's still just sitting there on idle.

[01:00] "If you hold to philosophical naturalism, then that is in fact the case. Philosophical and evolutionary naturalism would be the belief that there are no supernatural entities; the natural world is all of existence, and humans came about by accident through the blind workings of matter."

Does Inspiring Philosophy think that we're all idiots or something? He just displayed the encyclopedia definition of naturalism on his own video and then proceeded to read out a completely different definition. That's the second time he's done this in less than a minute of speaking! So let's read IP's very own citation for him, shall we?

Naturalism is an approach to philosophical problems that interprets them as tractable through the methods of the empirical sciences, or at least without a distinctively a priori project of theorizing. For much of the history of philosophy it has been widely held that philosophy involved a distinctive method, and could achieve knowledge distinct from that attained by the special sciences. Thus, metaphysics and epistemology have often jointly occupied a position of "first philosophy," laying the necessary grounds for the understanding of reality and the justification of knowledge claims. Naturalism rejects philosophy's claim to that special status. Whether in epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, or other areas, naturalism seeks to show that philosophical problems, as traditionally conceived, are ill-formulated and can be solved or displaced by appropriately naturalistic methods. Naturalism often assigns a key role to the methods and results of the empirical sciences, and sometimes aspires to reductionism and physicalism. However, there are many versions of naturalism and some are explicitly non-scientistic. What they share is a repudiation of the view of philosophy as exclusively a priori theorizing concerned with a distinctively philosophical set of questions.

– Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

So there you have it. Naturalism is not a particular set of beliefs about the universe, but really more of a methodology for evaluating philosophical problems. More often than not, that methodology is specifically understood to follow the rules of empirical sciences, which is honestly the real target of this whole discussion anyway. Notice, however, that naturalism does not explicitly reject the existence of supernatural entities, nor does it commit you to any particular views about human development. Those are simply consequences of applied naturalism, but not central tenets of it.

It's important to realize that anything which exists and interacts with other existing things must, by definition, have a nature---a collection of essential identifiable properties and causal relationships with respect to other things. We can formally state these properties through purely analytic methods, but any claim to their existence can only be justified through the use of empirical

data. Supernatural entities, in contrast, are philosophically meaningless to even talk about. How do I identify an entity that, by definition, is "above" any need for essential properties? How do I prove that such a thing exists when, by definition, such things fail to behave in accordance with any causally predictive patterns? Naturalists don't reject the existence of supernatural entities through some rote, a priori conviction; they reject them because the idea itself is incomprehensible!

[01:14] "We would have evolved by accident from the lower animals by passing on traits and beliefs that help us survive."

No, that is NOT an intrinsic view of naturalism. That is a sloppily-worded summary of human evolutionary biology, as understood by the contingent findings of naturalistic methodologies. And even then, you still managed to get key aspects completely wrong. Beliefs are not "passed on" from one generation to the next, because beliefs are not inheritable traits. Only genes can do that.

[01:14] "Everything that makes us who we are would have come together via natural selection to aid us in surviving. However, that would include everything about us, which includes the chemistry of the brain and how it functions. The human-evolved brain would only have come about as a means to aid an organism in surviving."

Nowhere did Dennett ever imply that literally everything which makes you "you" is determined entirely by genetics and natural selection. He is just talking about the natural development of human brains and explaining how your mind is simply a product of that brain in action. However, there is also a lot to be said about the importance of environmental circumstance and personal experience as potent factors towards building a coherent sense of self-identity. It's not just evolution and nothing else.

[02:04] "So if naturalism is true, everything the brain does is for survival, which must necessarily include all the beliefs and thoughts it has; which would entail the fact that all the beliefs we think are true of reality were really just formed in the brain to help us survive. But consequently, this would also include the belief in naturalism. So if you believe naturalism is true, then you also have to believe you believe naturalism is true because your brain has decided this belief is beneficial for survival. Not because it is true."

So yes, IP really believes that, according to naturalism, everything about your mind is the product of pure, natural selection alone. There is no room for personal experience or environmental conditions, and everything must unilaterally facilitate survival, or else.

First off, nothing about philosophical naturalism requires you to hold any position for or against evolution. It is only by applying the naturalistic methods of science that one arrives at the strong indication of an evolutionary history behind human development. Since that development already encompasses everything from basic morphology to fundamental biochemistry, why not also include cognitive capacity as well? We know that physical brains are specifically responsible for our memory, sense processing, behavioral responses, and language, so why not also our faculties for higher reasoning? Nothing about this presumption is inherently troubling, unless one has already decided, in advance, that human reason is literally the product of magic---as if no natural process whatsoever is remotely capable of producing a reliable cognitive faculty.

Secondly, not everything the brain does has to be for survival. Survival alone does not guarantee reproductive success, nor does every waking moment of our life have to be consumed by this goal. All that evolution fundamentally requires is for the brain to at least do something, eventually, which contributes more to overall reproductive fitness than could otherwise be achieved without it. You could spend hours of your day, every day, doing nothing but pick your nose and scratch your ass, and natural selection won't necessarily care. All that it requires is for you to do something else with the remainder of your time that promotes fitness.

Thirdly, Inspiring Philosophy seems to be hopelessly confused about the distinction between a process and the product. The mind not just some collection of stored memories and beliefs, nor does it randomly poke blindly at arbitrary philosophical perspectives. Rather, the mind a very complex, interrelated set of processes. Individual beliefs are the result of those processes acting on sensory data as perceived naturally through the environment. Natural selection cannot select for individual beliefs in any direct sense, but can only select for processes that are more or less capable of producing "good" beliefs out of the information they're given.

Remember that if what you believe about the world is true, then in principle, you ought to be able to use that belief to make testable empirical predictions---what consequences tend to follow specific actions under specific conditions? Likewise, by contrapositive, if the predictions of your beliefs fail to produce the expected outcomes, then by definition, such beliefs have to be false. That is the pragmatic, scientific measure for truth itself, which is perfectly consistent with naturalistic philosophy. We may therefore presume, as a matter of rote definition, the existence of a very profound connection between true beliefs and overall reproductive fitness. Natural selection does, in fact, highly favor the development of cognitive faculties that are perfectly capable of producing lots of true beliefs.

Notice that the process doesn't even have to be perfect, either. All that it needs to do is eventually compile enough true beliefs about the world so as to facilitate good decision-making throughout one's life. At the same time, it must also reject enough false beliefs so as to avoid any catastrophic blunders. If mistakes are made, however, then oh well. All natural selection can do is maybe come up with something better through the next iteration. Either way, it is still perfectly reasonable to expect a natural process to be generally reliable overall, despite also being fallible.

[02:35] "Thus as Alvin Plantinga identifies..."

Seriously? Alvin Plantinga!? The very same Alvin Plantinga who once argued, "It is entirely right, rational, reasonable, and proper to believe in God without any evidence or argument at all." Are you sure you want to hang your philosophical hat on this guy's arguments?

[02:36] "Philosophical naturalism falls into a self-defeating circle where your belief, naturalism is true, must entail you are a product of evolutionary naturalism alone, and therefore all your beliefs are programmed into you to help you survive, including your belief, naturalism is true."

Let's just assume for a moment that this train of logic is perfectly valid. However, I'm going to replace naturalism with monistic idealism, because that's IP's favorite little worldview:

Your belief, that monistic idealism is true, must entail you are the product of a mentally forged reality contained within the mind of God, and therefore all your beliefs are programmed into you by God, including the belief that monistic idealism is true.

Oh my goodness! It's a circle! Therefore, by IP's very own logic, we have just debunked his favorite pet theology.

Obviously there's something terribly wrong here. Starting with the most glaring problem, it seems that IP utterly fails to grasp the difference between circular reasoning and basic, internal consistency. Because yes, if you hold to a belief in naturalism, even as IP defines it, then it stands to reason that purely natural forces are capable of bringing about human cognitive faculties. If those faculties are inherently reliable at producing true beliefs over time, then it would obviously have to follow that human beings might someday come to the true conclusion that naturalism is, itself, true.

That's not a "self-defeating circle," you moron. That's called "self-consistency." It's a good thing.

But of course, it gets worse than that. Starting with the very first premise, IP gives the proposition "I believe naturalism is true." Yet as we already discovered using his very own encyclopedic citation, naturalism is not a specific belief about anything, but rather a formal statement of methodology. To say that you are a naturalist simply means that you probably tend to evaluate synthetic propositions through the methods of empirical science, rather than any sort of naïve a priori system of armchair philosophy. It says nothing about the ultimate nature of reality itself, but only commits you to a specific methodology when investigating claims about reality. The very proposition "I believe naturalism is true" has never once been uttered by an actual naturalist because it's technically not even a coherent thing to say out loud. The correct phrasing would be more like "I choose to evaluate truth claims through the methods of naturalistic science."

But hey, let's ignore that problem, too, and just assume IP's definition anyway. Naturalism is the view that there are no supernatural entities and that evolution is responsible for literally everything about us. Please do tell me, how exactly does IP imagine people came to this conclusion in the first place? Because as far as I can tell, he seems to think all naturalists around the world just assumed their position outright as some kind of rote, axiomatic fiat---as if there were no external justification for that view, whatsoever. Yet rather than point out the obvious case of question-begging that would entail, he instead leads us on some convoluted train of logic that no one has ever argued in the history of science: naturalism is true because "all my beliefs are programmed into me to help me survive," which is only true because "I am a product of evolutionary naturalism alone," which in turn is true because "naturalism is true."

Remember that the reason why naturalists reject supernatural entities is because the very idea is fundamentally meaningless to talk about. How do you prove the existence of an entity that, by definition, has no properties and no empirical manifestations? So obviously the justification for naturalism is not "because nature programmed me to believe in naturalism," nor is it a position that we just presume outright for no apparent reason. The train of logic is not a closed circle, but in fact contains perfectly reasonable justification wholly independent of the claims being presented here.

[02:55] “Several experts have identified this consequence. Philosopher Richard Rorty says.”

Oh look. An appeal to authority. How cute.

[03:12] “J. M. Smith never understood why organisms have feelings.”

Oh look. Another appeal to authority. And this one is a bald-faced argument from ignorance. It's like a two-for-one fallacy! Some random guy you’ve never heard of doesn’t understand feelings, so therefore all biology is completely incapable of explaining them. Is that how this works?

[03:34] “Even the great Charles Darwin worried, with me the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy?”

This is the third brainless appeal to authority that IP has made in barely 30 seconds. All it shows it that, apparently, Charles Darwin didn’t have the best handle on philosophy mind or philosophy of pragmatism. And why would he? William James didn’t formally introduce pragmatism to the world until 1898---17 years after this letter was written! So who cares? What is this supposed to prove?

[03:50] “Why would it not be most beneficial for survival to have an accurate and true description of reality? Surely an organism who has trustworthy cognitive faculties and knowing what is true, would be the most optimal way to survive. Therefore evolution would select faculties that are designed to know truth.”

This is the point where it really became painfully obvious to me that Inspiring Philosophy has no functional understanding of basic epistemology. So before anything about this argument can continue, we need to clear up a few misconceptions.

It's important to understand that any time we talk about a thing like truth, we're not talking about some intrinsic metaphysical quality of reality itself. Technically, what we're really talking about is a property of propositions. That is to say, propositions can either be true or they can be false, but there is no such thing as raw "essence of truth" interwoven into the fabric of space and time. Speaking more formally, a truth value is classically defined as a member of a binary set that contains the elements "True" and "False.” The purpose of this set is to serve as a kind of marker for linguistic propositions in order to help us measure their epistemic "correctness." What exactly that means is open to some interpretation, but we can give it a rigorous definition through a mechanism known as a truth assignment. Speaking formally again, a truth assignment (also called a truth valuation, or an interpretation) is defined as a mapping function between the set of simple linguistic propositions and the set of binary truth values.

Pragmatic empirical rationalism, aka science, aka naturalism, is a perfectly well-defined system of truth assignment functions that suffers no problems whatsoever under the arguments presented in this video. A necessary, though not sufficient, measure of true synthetic propositions is the principle of empirical predictability. If some proposition is true, then we must be able to use that proposition to exercise decisions under the expectation of predictable empirical consequences. We therefore cannot prove any synthetic proposition true with absolute certainty, but we can at least

expect certain properties from such propositions if and when we ever find them. Likewise, if some propositional framework fails to manifest itself through reliable empirical predictions, then we can confidently assert that such a framework is “false.”

While you are certainly welcome to nit-pick the details if you like, that is the broad definition of synthetic truth assignment according to most understandings of scientific naturalism. Supernaturalism, on the other hand, has no truth assignment functions to speak of and cannot even qualify as coherent. Never in the history of philosophy or science has our understanding of anything ever been improved by the presumption of supernatural entities.

[04:10] “However, Plantinga anticipates this objection and points out the probability of this would be low, or we should remain agnostic if naturalism were true.”

It’s not a matter of probability, you moron. It’s a matter of definition. A “true” synthetic proposition is philosophically measured by the capacity to logically formulate decisions under the expectation of predictable, empirical consequences. If some empirical prediction fails to produce the expected result, then by definition, that belief is now false. In what logical universe does the ability to predict and shape the fucking future have low correlation with reproductive fitness?

[04:18] “There is no necessarily equivocation between what is what is useful is what is true.”

Nobody has ever argued that usefulness is equivalent to truth; only that empirical predictability should be a necessary property of truth. Not only is this argument a complete strawman, but Inspiring Philosophy knows it is. I know he knows because I have personally explained this very same misconception to him long before the video was even made! (see comment sections here). So not only is IP just plain wrong in his explanation of basic epistemology, but he is also willfully lying about it, too.

The pragmatic, scientific perspective of truth has always been grounded on the idea that empirical predictability is a necessary, though not sufficient, measure of true synthetic propositions. You don’t have to apply every proposition towards something practical or “useful” in order to call it true. However, in order for some belief to eventually produce practical applications, then it probably needs to contain at least some reasonable approximation of the truth, doesn't it? Maybe not perfectly true or inerrant in every detail, but certainly closer to the truth than the alternative.

Tell you what. Let’s do a little thought experiment. Consider a possible world where everything I believe about the universe just so happens to be categorically false. However, every single time I make a decision based off of those beliefs, the consequences are maximally predictable and desirable for me anyway. Likewise, any time I commit a single "true" belief to action, the outcome is never predictable or desirable for me at all. I ask you, given such a world, is it even meaningful to call any of my beliefs "false?” And if so, why would I ever want to believe anything that was true? I could spend my entire life being completely wrong about absolutely everything and actually be better off for it.

So yes, we must conclude that, while not perfectly equivalent, true beliefs are necessarily correlated with usefulness and reproductive fitness, doncha think?

[04:20] “Some things can be useful while not being true. Take Ptolemaic astronomy. For centuries, this model was used to help us in navigation and star charting. It was useful, but not a true description of reality. And of course, later was replaced by a more accurate model.”

Pray tell, Mr “Inspiring” Philosophy, but how exactly would you go about disproving the geocentric model of our solar system? Do you really think that a supernatural, immaterial force is responsible for planetary motion? Did Jesus tell Copernicus in a dream that the sun was the center of the solar system? Or, just maybe, do you think that geocentric models consistently fail to make reliable, empirical predictions? You know, pragmatic, scientific naturalism?

Let’s not forget that the primary reason why people objected to heliocentrism is precisely because it violated the supernatural presuppositions of religious dogma. It wasn’t naturalism that censored Galileo’s findings, but the immaterial, supernatural convictions of the Roman Catholic Church. How stupid do you have to be when your best example of the failures of naturalism is actually one of its greatest triumphs?

[04:36] “However, if naturalism is true, our knowledge could be analogous to Ptolemaic astronomy; simply a useful model to help us get through the world.”

Yes, a model that was only proven false through the methods of naturalistic science and which religious zealous refused to give up because of their a priori supernatural convictions!

Again, what process do you have for measuring the truth of synthetic propositions that works any better? Remember that you’re the one arguing against naturalism, here. So why don’t you show us all exactly how you propose to disprove Ptolemaic astronomy without appealing to naturalism or naturalistic methods?

[04:50] “So just because our knowledge works in practical measures, that doesn’t make it true of what reality is. Take another example: qualia; specifically color. In nature, external objects reflect EM waves, which hit the human eye to create biochemical states, which is transmitted to the brain as neural patterns in the primary visual cortex. If naturalism is true, the brain would somehow create color from this data as a useful model. The original wavelengths have no color. Color is, as John Locke states, secondary qualities, or contents of the mind. The emergent wavelengths are perceived in the eyes and created in the brain, and apart from the brain, color doesn’t exist. So color is simply useful model created by the brain, but not actually what exists in nature.”

Where is IP even going with this? He seems to claiming that, according to naturalism, color is just a subjective sensory perception. It doesn’t “exist” in any objective sense of the word, but simply manifests as a purely mental construct.

Okay… and? Is this supposed to be controversial or upsetting in some way? That’s just basic color theory. Everyone knows that color doesn’t really exist as some intrinsic property of real objects. So where’s the beef? What’s the alternative? How exactly does the presumption of supernatural entities change any of this? Even if magic were real and God was in charge of everything, then color would still only exist as a subjective human perception.

[05:34] “And if the brain does this with color, it can equally be argued it does it with our knowledge. It is not necessarily true, but a useful model we are programmed to think is true to help us survive.”

At this point, Inspiring Philosophy just goes on to repeat himself a bunch, all while making nonsensical arguments against his made-up conception of naturalism. The whole thing can pretty much be summarized with the phrase “this person has no comprehension of basic epistemology.” He likes to drop the word “truth” everywhere, despite making no real effort to define what truth is or how we’re supposed to recognize truth when we see it. He also complains a lot that naturalism cannot provide us with absolute knowledge about objective reality, despite the fact that skepticism and fallibilism are actually fundamental principles embraced by philosophers and scientists alike. He then offers no alternative methodology that could presumably do any better, all while habitually insisting that true beliefs about objective reality cannot possibly correlate with reproductive fitness.

Just stop and ask yourself right now, why do you even bother believing anything at all? What difference does it make whether or not that information crammed in your head is true? The only meaningful explanation is so that we can eventually use that information as a guide for our actions. Decisions based on true beliefs will manifest themselves in the form of controlled, predictable experiences, while decisions based on false beliefs will eventually fail in that goal. Any beliefs that refuse to drive any actions whatsoever, even in principle, are little more than useless rhetorical gibberish. They don’t do anything, and thus make no difference if we call them true or false.

This is what makes pragmatic scientific naturalism is the ultimate measure of all philosophical truth. It's the only system with any functional relevance! If you cannot present your argument within the bounds of such a methodology, then by definition, you are not being reasonable. The moment IP rejected pragmatism, all he did was sever any philosophical connection between beliefs, actions, and consequences. It therefore makes no difference what alternative he thinks he has because the very idea of trying to think of one is tantamount to vapid sophistry. I could unilaterally concede his entire position outright and literally nothing in my life would have to change as a result. That’s how hopeless his position is. Even if he “wins,” he still loses.

The Problem of Omnipotence by AntiCitizenX

Imagine yourself relaxing at home one day when you suddenly hear a knock at the front door. To your amazement, it appears to be none other than John DeLancie himself, standing on your doorstep.

"Hello.” he says. “My name is Q, from the Q continuum. Just stopping by to let you know that I’m an omnipotent god. You should probably start bowing before me or else I might get really upset."

"That's cool," you think. You've never met an omnipotent being before. But hey, he seems like a pretty honest guy, and you're probably not very keen on the idea of getting turned into a frog right now. So naturally, you take him completely at his word and start bowing right that second, am I right?

No, of course not! You're skeptical. Maybe this person is telling you the truth, or maybe this person is just some weirdo pulling your leg. So you demand some basic empirical evidence to show that this being really is what he says he is.

"All right," he says. "You want proof? You got it."

The next thing you know, Mr. Q snaps his fingers, and, in a brilliant flash of light, your car is suddenly transformed into a giant pile of squirrels. It's a very impressive trick to be sure and maybe even enough to warrant sincere placation of this being. However, we're all hard-nosed philosophers around here, and we want to be as sure as we possibly can. So let's put this guy to the test and see whether or not he truly deserves the title of omnipotent, rather than, say, really-really awesome and powerful.

You might be forgiven for thinking that this was a perfectly straightforward question to ask, and in any other context it probably would be. But religious philosophy has a really funny habit of tripping all over itself whenever questions like this crop up. Because as simple and intuitive as this problem may seem, most religious philosophers cannot for the life of themselves seem to answer it coherently. It's an elegant little thought experiment that perfectly captures the bizarre mental gymnastics of Christian apologetics, as well as some of the foundational failings of their entire philosophical world. It's also a really fun exercise in basic critical thinking skill that takes us over a surprisingly broad spectrum of interesting philosophical subjects. That's why I personally find this question to be so strangely fascinating and why I think you'll enjoy following me down the looming rabbit hole that it represents.

To begin our analysis, let's frame the question in terms of something a little more mundane. Rather than claim to be a full-on omnipotent deity, suppose instead that our stranger merely claims to be a reasonably competent automobile mechanic. It's basically the exact same situation as before, but now framed in a completely nonreligious context. So ask yourself now: How exactly should we go about verifying this claim? After all, it's not like we just take random people completely at their word for this stuff. There's real money at stake here, plus the functionality of our cars. Surely there must be some sort of test we can offer before honoring him with such a title, right?

Obviously, the answer is yes, and it works like this. Go get out a piece of paper and write the following words that the top:

Things That a Competent Automobile

Mechanic Should be Able to Do.

After that, you just enumerate the list with a collection of pertinent challenges. For example:

Change a tire.

Change oil.

Flush coolant.

...

… and so on until you've completely populated the list. Once finished, you can then issue your challenge in the following fashion:

Dear Mr. Stranger.

Given the proper tools, work space, assistance, etc, I challenge you to complete each of these items on my list within a reasonable amount of time. Or, if the list is infinite in length, then at least complete a reasonable sampling of items until I'm satisfied.

There, done. If our subject is successful, then great. He has officially earned himself the title of competent automobile mechanic. And if not, then oh well. Maybe he's just pretty good with cars or perhaps halfway decent. That's fine, too. They're just words and labels.

Now to be fair, this isn't exactly how we all go about our daily lives, but it does illustrate an important philosophical aspect over the nature of language. Doctors, lawyers, presidents, squirrels, rocks, potatoes---they're all just labels that we define and assign in accordance with a distinct set of empirically verifiable properties. Anything that demonstrates the properties of a given list may officially earn the corresponding title, while things which fail to satisfy those properties are simply not referred to as such. It's basically a form of philosophical verificationism, and it represents a foundational pillar on which human language operates.

With that in mind, let's go back to our supposedly omnipotent friend, Mr. Q. Start by getting out a piece of paper and writing the following words that the top:

Things That an Omnipotent Being Should Be Able to Do

What items go on the list now? The answer, it turns out, depends a lot on who you ask. For example, according to one school of thought, the answer is pretty simple: Anything. Literally anything you can think of goes on the list.

Make it rain frogs? Check!

Create a married bachelor? You got it!

Flargle a snuffin? Sure, why not?

...

This is a naïve form of omnipotence commonly referred to as absolutism, or absolute omnipotence. Rene Descartes was a famous defender of this position, and even some modern philosophers have periodically defended it as well [1]. It's actually pretty easy to see where this idea comes from, given that the Bible itself practically screams this interpretation at you. For instance,

Matthew 19:26---With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

Mark 10:27---With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.

Luke 1:37---For nothing will be impossible with God.

Job 42:2---I know that you [God] can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Philippians 4:13---I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me

Despite its intuitive basis on Christian scripture, the idea of absolutism is clearly riddled with problems. For example, take the challenge of Flargling a Snuffin. According to absolutism, Mr. Q here should be perfectly capable of doing exactly that without a second thought. Yet, as should be obvious by now, flargle and snuffin are just gibberish words I made up out of nothing---they have no established definition. So pray tell, what exactly could our subject ever do that would satisfy the challenge?

Bear in mind now that this is not a limitation on our subject per se, but a simple problem of language. It's like mashing my keyboard with random characters and saying "here, do this!" There's simply nothing to do. I may as well just stand there in silence, or perhaps shrug my shoulders and grunt. Mr. Q cannot ever hope to fulfill a challenge if no coherent challenge was actually given.

Notice that a similar argument also applies to the challenge of creating a married bachelor. By definition, a bachelor is an unmarried man, which means the creation of a married bachelor is the same thing as creating a married man who is also not married---a logical contradiction. The set of all things that are married is mutually exclusive to the set of all things that are not married. It therefore doesn't matter what Mr. Q ever presents to me because the rules of logic forbid me from ever recognizing a successful outcome. Again, that's not a limitation on our subject, but another limitation on language itself. The very words used to formulate the challenge are simply put together wrongly.

This is exactly why absolutism is generally regarded as a pretty terrible form of omnipotence. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that the death of absolutism does necessarily imply the death of God. All it says is that, whatever things are out there for us to give labels to, none of them will ever be able to demonstrate omnipotence to any rational satisfaction. And since no being can ever possibly earn itself such a title (even in principle), the title itself is essentially meaningless. If, however, we simply redefine omnipotence to mean something slightly different, then all of the problems we just talked about would immediately vanish in a puff of logic.

Remember now that all we're trying to do here at the end of the day is define a word. If that word is coherent, logical, and verifiable, then great. We can use it to describe various entities in our environment, if and when we ever happen to encounter them. But if the word is incoherent or logically inconsistent, then oh well. It's not like the universe cares one way or the other. All it means is that we can't use the word to meaningfully describe stuff. Time to go back to the drawing board and see if we can't think of something better.

Much to the credit of religious philosophers today, that seems to be exactly what happened. Rather than literally be capable of doing anything, a far more common view of omnipotence is the ability to do all that is logically possible [2]. It's a perfectly straightforward revision that specifically seeks to avoid the incoherence of absolutism while still preserving the totality of power we've come to expect. And that's a good thing! So let's all get out a piece of paper and write the following words at the top:

Logically Possible Actions

What exactly does this mean? How do we determine whether or not some particular task should go on the list?

Here's how I interpret it.

Consider a simple challenge like "eat a taco." If I can imagine some logically possible world wherein that task is being performed by some agent, then good. It goes on the list. For example, I can imagine a logically possible world where it is true that the President of the United States is eating a taco. Therefore, it seems to me, it must be logically possible to eat a taco. It is officially something that can be done, and therefore it must go on the list. Anything that wishes to call itself omnipotent must therefore be able to replicate that feat.

That was easy enough. So let's shake things up a bit by asking a very simple question: Is it, or is it not, logically possible to tell a lie?

Obviously, the answer has to be yes, because people around the world tell lies all the time. Therefore, by modal axiom B [3], it must be logically possible to tell a lie. Therefore, by the definition of omnipotence, all omnipotent beings must be able to tell lies. Strangely enough, however, the Holy Christian Bible says outright that lying is something God cannot do; not just something God doesn't do or chooses not to do, but literally cannot do.

Titus 1:2 "[I]n hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began."

Hebrews 6:18---"[I]t is impossible for God to lie."

So right off the bat, the very definition offered by professional Christian philosophers themselves has immediately precluded their very own God from being omnipotent! Isn't that funny? But let's ignore that little problem anyway and see what else can we find wrong with this definition.

How about this? Go outside and start collecting rocks into a giant pile. Keep piling up rocks until the pile is so heavy that you cannot ever hope to lift them. Congratulations! You have just created a finite pile of rocks that officially satisfies the description of being unliftable by its own maker. Therefore, it must be logically possible to create a pile of rocks, or even a single rock, that satisfies the description of being unliftable by its own maker. Therefore, all omnipotent beings must be able to replicate this task. So let's pose the challenge.

Dear Mr. Q,

I challenge you to create a finite rock such that its own maker cannot lift it. Go.

So far so good, right? But what happens if Mr. Q actually succeeds in this challenge? After all, last time I checked, it is always logically possible to lift a finite rock.

Notice that this is just a simple variation on the paradox of the stone---Can God create a rock so heavy that even God Himself cannot lift it. It's a famous philosophical challenge to the idea of omnipotence because it logically prevents any being from ever demonstrating such a property. By definition, all omnipotent beings must, at any given moment, possess the power to both create

rocks and to lift rocks subject to specifications. Yet the moment our subject creates a rock he cannot lift, he cannot possibly satisfy the definition of omnipotence any more. That means no being can ever possibly earn the title of omnipotence because the very act of proving it requires them to not have it.

Notice also that we could just as easily frame this exact same problem any number of ways. For example, one of my personal favorites is to stand before a podium and truthfully speak the words "I am not omnipotent." Again, it's a perfectly logical task, in that I can imagine a logically possible world where this is taking place. Therefore, at any given moment, an omnipotent being must, by definition, be able to replicate that task---stand before a podium and truthfully speak the words "I am not omnipotent." Unfortunately, the only way to actually possess such a power is by not being omnipotent!

Bear in mind now that this is not some clever philosophical trick, but a fundamental property of binary propositional logic. Self-referential propositions, when coupled with logical negations, tend to produce really nasty inconsistencies. It's the exact same reason why we have so many other famous paradoxes as well. For example, the Liar's Paradox, Russel's Paradox, the Halting Problem, and even Godel's Incompleteness Theorems are all just similar manifestations of self-referential negation. So it's not like I'm just making this stuff up, because philosophers, logicians, and mathematicians have been studying this exact same phenomenon for centuries. We therefore must conclude that the capacity to do all that is logically possible is, ironically, not a logical possibility. You can either be complete, or you can be consistent, but you cannot have both simultaneously.

At this point, you would think that most Christians would simply say something like, "why yes, that seems to be a bit of an issue. Perhaps my conception of omnipotence is just a little bit too greedy. Let's maybe learn from the last 100 years of mathematical logic and see if we can't find something a little less contradictory." But of course, the exact opposite is generally true, with hack philosophers around the world dogmatically clinging to their precious definition anyway.

For instance, one complaint that you might hear is how the challenge itself is inherently ambiguous. When I create a rock, the word "maker" refers to myself, the person speaking to you right now. Yet when someone else performs the same task, the meaning of "maker" suddenly changes. On other words, the challenge shares the same type of proposition, but not the same token [4]. Thus, in order for the challenge to be comparable, Mr. Q would not need to create a rock that he cannot lift, but only create a rock that I cannot lift.

This may sound like a somewhat reasonable point at first, but quickly falls apart the moment you actually stop and think about it. For starters, we don't have to use the word "maker" if we don't want to. We could have challenged our subject to create a rock so heavy that no being in the universe can lift it. Or better yet, stand before a podium and truthfully state the proposition that "There are no omnipotent beings." They're still logically possible actions in some logically possible world, which means they still have to go on the list.

The real problem, however, is that all actions are inherently self-referential. To see why, simply imagine what would happen if I challenged you, right now, to eat a taco. Naturally, if you're like

most people, the obvious interpretation of that task is to immediately grab a taco and start shoving it into your face. If, however, you were to then challenge me to replicate that task, what exactly do you imagine happening next? Do I begin shoving a taco into my own face? Or must I literally shove a second taco into your face and force you to eat it?

Obviously, the former interpretation is the correct viewpoint, because that's how every English-speaking human on the planet understands it. The whole point of issuing the challenge in the first place is to see if you have the power within yourself to replicate a power that I had within myself. Yet, for some strange reason, the moment we try to apply this same line of reason within a religious-philosophical context, then all of a sudden people start acting like a bunch of pedantic morons. By invoking the type/token distinction in this way, it is literally meaningless for me to challenge you to "eat a taco." I have to instead say something horribly obtuse, like "I challenge you to bring about the event of you eating this taco."

Well I'm sorry guys, but events are not the same thing as actions, and I should not have to specify a particular actor in order to coherently define some particular act. When you challenge me to jump five feet in the air, you obviously mean that I have to propel myself with my own legs off the ground beneath me. If, however, I then challenge you to jump five feet in the air, then obviously you must now propel yourself off the ground with your legs. All logically possible actions are, in some way or another, inherently self-referential. Deal with it.

With that taken care of, the next most common objection I tend to hear is that omnipotence doesn't really mean the ability to do all that is logically possible. Rather, it means something more like the ability to do all that is consistent with one's nature. That is to say, if the proposition "Y is doing X" is logically self-consistent, then for an omnipotent being, it will always be true that "Y can do X".

Okay, fair enough. If you want to just summarily change the definition of omnipotence again, then that's great. It was a bad definition from the get-go, and we can only grow as philosophers by trying to find something better. But can we please all be grown-up enough to admit that this is nothing more than an indirect admission of defeat? The previous definition was inherently flawed, and so now we're changing it into something else. Yet whenever I talk to Christian apologists about this, they almost always pretend as if the new definition is really what it was supposed to be all along, and how dare I straw-man such brilliant thinkers by ever suggesting otherwise!

Fine. Whatever. Let's just roll with it and see what we find this time, shall we? Can an omnipotent being tell a lie or what?

Typically, the answer to this question is that it depends on the being. For example, the God of Christianity cannot tell a lie because doing so would contradict His perfectly honest nature. Thus, to ask God to lie is the logical equivalent to asking a perfectly honest being to not be perfectly honest---apparently, a logical contradiction. But don't worry, God still gets to be omnipotent anyway because He can still do all the things that are consistent with his divine, unchanging nature. Likewise, God cannot stand before a podium and shout "I am not omnipotent" because that would produce a contradiction as well. Omnipotence is an inherent part of God's nature, so therefore it doesn't have to go on the list of things God can do. Bam. Problem solved!

This is usually the part where I begin to lose all patience with religious philosophers, because responses like this are clearly not well thought out. It really gets under my skin, too, because it represents a profound laziness that makes no effort whatsoever to consider the practical implications of what is actually being said. To illustrate, simply imagine God Himself standing on my doorstep in all His glory, when I issue the following challenge:

Dear God.

I challenge you, right now, to tell me a lie. Tell me that you're a potato. Go.

Pray tell, what exactly do Christians imagine happening next? Because as far as I can tell, they seem to imagine something like that scene from Liar Liar where Jim Carry tries to say that the pen is red, but just can't bring himself to do it [6]---as if some invisible, metaphysical force of honesty is somehow preventing the words from coming out of his mouth! Call me crazy, but I hardly find that to be consistent with the idea of unlimited potentiality. Or maybe Christians just imagine God standing there with a dumb look on His face, as if He didn't even understand the question? Or what if he just says "I'm sorry, but that would violate my essential nature. No thanks." What in the hell am I supposed to do with that?

But let's take it one step further. Suppose you challenge me to lift a 1000-lbs car over my head---except that ooh, I'm sorry, but that would violate my essential nature! You see, I'm a being comprised of physical muscle mass that can only lift 200 lbs. When you ask me to lift 1000 lbs, then you're asking me to perform a contradiction---A being that cannot lift more than 200 lbs is lifting more than 200 lbs. Not only that, but any challenge you give me can be counteracted in the exact same way. No being can logically be expected to do the things it cannot do.

So congratulations, my dear Christians! You've solved the omnipotence paradox. All you had to do was replace it with the omnipotence tautology. Literally anything and everything in the universe is now omnipotent because nothing can ever logically do the things it cannot do!

"Aha!" I hear you saying. "It is only incidental that you cannot lift 1000 lbs. I can still imagine a possible world wherein you are lifting 1000 lbs over your head. Therefore, it may be logically possible, but not physically possible!"

Actually, no. What you're imagining right now isn't me. It may be an entity very similar to me, but that's not really me. Because as we just established, I am not a being who can lift 1000 lbs over my head.

Or better yet, let's play that game in reverse. I can imagine a possible world wherein God is telling a lie. Now what? What's the difference? Why is lying a violation of God's essential nature, but lifting 1000 lbs is totally consistent with mine? Because as far as I can tell, this entire line of reasoning appears to be nothing more than blatant special pleading. When God can't do a thing, then it must be because it violates His essential nature. Yet when I can't do a thing, then apparently it's little more than a conditional happenstance of my feeble, limited existence.

So once again, we have another example of responding to an argument without any effort to actually address the argument. But the thing I find absolutely hilarious about this new definition

is how (of all people) the famous apologist Alvin Plantinga himself personally debunked it as far back as the 1960s [7]. All you have to do is imagine a man called Mr. McEar, who just so happens to have one essential property---he has only the power to scratch his ear, and nothing else. Thus, by definition, any other task you challenge him to complete is a logical violation of his essential nature. Hardly an "all-powerful" being, wouldn't you say? Yet, according to our new definition, Mr. McEar is still just as omnipotent as almighty God Himself!

All tangents aside, the real problem with this whole "essential nature" nonsense is just that: essentialism---the idea that there exists some kind of intrinsic "essence" to things that makes them what they are. It's a perfectly natural bias through which human beings tend to look at the world, but it's still completely bogus. Ever since the Greek philosopher Plutarch introduced the Theseus paradox back in the first century [8], philosophers have had very good reasons to reject essentialism as a worthless, incoherent concept. A chair does not have some magically objective "essence of chairness" that makes it a chair. It's just some arrangement of physical material stuff that human beings have arbitrarily decided to sit on and call a "chair." Likewise, there is no such thing as "essence of Godliness" that would make God "God." Rather, there is only a distinct collection of empirically verifiable properties which, if demonstrated, would earn some lucky entity the official title of "God."

So not only do we have Christians pushing yet another idea of omnipotence that just doesn't work, but it's grounded on philosophical presumptions that have been categorically debunked for almost two thousand years. However, it really needs to be emphasized that all of these crazy problems would vanish in a heartbeat if only the theists would just stop insisting on such bungled definitions. It's sad, too, because it's really not that hard to come up with something relatively functional. So let's do the theists' job for them and just define omnipotence in a way that isn't stupid, shall we?

Omnipotence: the capacity to create, destroy, and rearrange matter/energy in accordance with arbitrary whims.

There. Done! If we ever encounter any being with this kind of power, I will be more than happy to refer to such a being as "omnipotent." Can he create rocks? Sure. Can he lift rocks? Absolutely. But can he create a rock so heavy that even its own maker cannot lift it? Nope. Not a chance. But guess what? That's perfectly okay, because it's still logically consistent with the stated definition.

Notice how a definition like this also solves all kinds of goofy philosophical issues. For example, one lesser-known problem with omnipotence is the problem of creating two omnipotent beings at once. So let's imagine a possible world wherein two beings are both competing for the official title of "omnipotent deity." All we have to do is make a game out of it. Challenge one guy to turn my car into a pile of squirrels while challenging the other guy to turn it into a sack of potatoes. Whichever outcome occurs will then determine which guy is the loser and which guy earns the title. Done.

Or better yet, let's consider another lesser-known problem. I challenge you to truthfully tell me what I ate for dinner last year. You'll notice that this is not really so much a test of power, but rather a test of knowledge. Yet according to most classical definitions for omnipotence, there is no distinction. The omnipotent being must be able to do it because I formulated the challenge as a

logically coherent action. If, however, we adopt the new definition, then it is now possible for a being to be omnipotent, but not necessarily omniscient. All-powerful and all-knowing are now philosophically distinct concepts, as we should reasonably expect.

Notice also that there are still many possible ways to potentially break the definition. For example, could an omnipotent being create another omnipotent being? Or what if I challenge the being to kill itself? Would that violate the definition? Maybe, maybe not. But you'll notice that I'm not racking my brain with obtuse rationalizations just to protect a stupid definition. If it works, then great. It not, then oh well. We'll just think of something better.

The ultimate irony in this entire discussion is that, when all is said and done here, I'm basically just fixing the theists' philosophical problems for them. Yet if past experience is any guide, the overwhelming majority of them will never see it that way. Instead, they'll probably view this entire discussion as a literal attack on God Himself, as if the words used to describe some possible entity might have real power over whether or not it actually exists. That's what happens when you live your life defending dogma rather than honestly searching for a better understanding of the world. But the thing I find really embarrassing about this entire debate is that by clinging to their philosophically warped definitions, it is the Christians themselves who are logically forcing their God squarely into the realm of nonexistence. Even if there were a God-like thing somewhere out there in the cosmos for us to meet, the rules of language would prevent us from ever rationally calling it such.

There is No Such Thing as a Necessary Being by AntiCitizenX

Here's a quote by Alvin Plantinga explaining the idea of necessary existence.

"A necessary being is one that can't fail to exist, no matter how things have been. Or we can say that a necessary being is one that exists in every possible world, where a possible world is a way things could have been. Sort of a "total" way things could have been; it says something about everything. One of these possible worlds is actual, the rest of them aren't... A necessary being is one such that for any world at all, if it had been actual, it would have existed."

Before I respond to this claim, I think it's worth pointing out that this is something Alvin Plantinga genuinely believes in. The guy has written multiple books on this exact subject and even publicly defends them at every opportunity. Popular Christian apologists like William Lane Craig have likewise appealed to this same idea whenever they argue for God's existence. Christian fanboys on YouTube will even publish multi-part video series wherein they explain and defend this principle in elaborate detail. So I just want to be clear that this is not a fringe, philosophical claim, but a standard go-to principle within mainstream Christianity. The word "God" is defined to mean a "maximally great being," wherein maximal greatness is defined in such a way that includes the property of necessary existence in all possible worlds. Therefore, God exists in all possible worlds.

Now let's unpack what exactly is going on here. Whenever we talk about possible worlds, it's important to understand that we're simply talking about ways our reality might have been. For example, maybe you can imagine some possible world just like ours, only where George Clooney

is the president of the United States rather than Barack Obama. That's perfectly all right, and a lot of good philosophy is built on imagining all sorts of wacky what-if scenarios.

But what is a world, really? Because when we talk about possible worlds, we don't mean to imply literal, alternative realities just floating around "out there" in some cosmic multiverse ensemble. Rather, when you really get down to the nuts and bolts of it, a possible world is nothing more than a formal collection of propositions and truth values. It's like a giant book where someone has painstakingly written down every coherent proposition there is to make about our reality, followed by a simple check mark indicating true or false next to each one. That book, if one were to be constructed, would represent one possible world, and there are an infinite number of such books, or worlds, we could conceivably create. And if, by some fluke, we should ever happen to write a book that perfectly describes our present objective reality as it really is, then that book would be called the actual world.

Notice, however, that if we're going to describe our world using propositions, then we can't just randomly assign truth values willy-nilly. No matter what collection of propositions we use to describe some potential state of affairs, those propositions still have to obey the basic laws of logic. For example, consider the proposition George Clooney is the president of the United States and George Clooney is not the president of the United States. What if, for some reason, my world just so happens to assign a value of TRUE to this proposition? Obviously, my world now contains a logical contradiction and thus, by the principle of explosion, cannot coherently describe anything whatsoever. All such worlds that violate the laws of logic are therefore said to be impossible because they are not formally allowed within our hypothetical set of what-if scenarios.

In contrast, consider what happens when you encounter a proposition like Either George Clooney is the president or George Clooney is not the president. Obviously, this proposition is a logical tautology and therefore must be true under every possible interpretation. Any proposition in this category is therefore said to be necessary because it must always be assigned a value of TRUE in every logically consistent world. The very rules of logic don't allow for anything else.

This is all pretty straightforward material so far, and you can probably see why philosophers might get a lot of productive mileage out of conversing within this framework. We like imagining how the world might have turned out differently, and we like having a formal set of rules for discussing any scenarios. That's why modal logic is such a popular system for guiding philosophical conversations. However, modal logic is still a really flimsy system, and it doesn't take much effort to trick yourself into deriving total nonsense. For example, imagine a possible world where all bachelors have three wives. Sounds like a contradiction, right? After all, by definition, a bachelor is an unmarried man, while marriage, by definition, implies a man with at least one wife. So to say that you are imagining a bachelor with three wives is the logical equivalent to imagining a man with no wives that has wives. You can't do it. The words are literally put together wrongly, which is why any attempt to imagine such a world is said to be necessarily impossible.

Now watch what happens if I arbitrarily decide to redefine the word bachelor. Instead of being an unmarried man, I want the word bachelor to mean a married man with three wives. After all, it's just a word, right? I'm free to define my terms however I please, am I not? Maybe I can even

convince the staff at Webster's dictionary to go along with my definition, thus rendering it totally official within the English language. Now it's not only logically possible for bachelors to have three wives but also logically necessary! They can't NOT have three wives, because the basic definition of the word doesn't allow for anything else. Thus, by claiming that all bachelors have three wives, I have just stated the logical equivalent to all men with three wives are men with three wives – a necessary logical tautology.

Hopefully you can see why this might be a problem in that I can now derive any necessary truth I want, simply by playing with my definitions. I could define Santa Claus as a being that exists, and that fact would necessarily be true in all possible worlds because any being that exists is, tautologically, a being that exists. Any attempt to imagine a possible world without Santa Claus is now logically impossible because the very phrase Santa Claus does not exist is now the logical equivalent to saying A being that exists does not exist. It cannot possibly be true!

Notice how this is exactly what Christian apologists are trying to do whenever they describe God as a necessary being. God is, by definition, a maximally great being; and maximal greatness, by definition, includes the property of existing in all possible worlds. Therefore, by definition, God is necessarily a being that exists in all possible words. God cannot fail to exist, because again, the very phrase God does not exist is the logical equivalent to saying A being that exists does not exist.

Obviously, something is terribly wrong here in that you can't just go around defining things into existence! After all, if you get to define God as a being that exists, then I get to define God as a being that does not exist. Not only is God's existence now false, but also necessarily false in all possible worlds. Now what, Christians? My definition is just as valid as yours. Who wins?

This is a really interesting dilemma to me because it forces us to address two fundamental philosophical questions:

How do language definitions work? That is to say, what's the point of defining things in the first place?

What does it mean to say that a thing exists? Why is existence different from other ideas in language definition?

To begin, simply consider the tautological proposition that all unmarried men are unmarried men; a necessary proposition to be sure, but also completely vapid and meaningless. Sure, I can go then ahead and define the word bachelor to mean unmarried man, but you'll notice that nothing about this situation fundamentally changes. The proposition that all bachelors are unmarried men is still the same, vapid tautology, but spoken in fewer syllables. So unless you're perfectly satisfied with empty, meaningless substitution, we need to find something outside of mere wordplay on which to ground our use of language.

With that in mind, consider what happens when we formulate our language definitions in the form of a conditional, empirical proposition:

IF on some rare occasion I should happen to encounter the empirical manifestation of an entity that is apparently both a man and unmarried, THEN I will formally choose to call such a thing a "bachelor."

Now we have a definition with real, functional merit. Rather than mindlessly swap words for other words, we instead use language to place labels on distinct sensory experiences. It's a little thing called the verifiability criterion of meaning, and it represents the ultimate foundation for all human language itself. Any time I state some language definition, then in principle I have to be able to use that definition to identify distinct elements within my immediate sensory environment. Without this empirical foundation, all human language immediately collapses back into a meaningless, tautological void.

Now that we have a working conception of what definitions are supposed to accomplish, we can finally consider what happens whenever I try to lump existence into the definition of some word:

IF on some rare occasion I should happen to encounter the empirical manifestation of an entity that is apparently a man, unmarried, and existing, THEN I will formally choose to call such a thing a "bachelor."

You may not notice it right away, but there's really something strangely off about this statement. Because if I should ever just so happen to encounter the empirical manifestation of anything, then it seems pretty safe to conclude that this is also apparently a thing that exists. Likewise, if I should ever happen to imagine a world that contains no bachelors for me to ever empirically identify, even in principle, then it should go without saying that bachelors don't exist in such a world.

This is an important observation to make because it means that existence is inherently meaningless and redundant when stated as a formal property of bachelors. The set of all things I can empirically identify as bachelors must, by definition, also be things that exist. It therefore makes no difference whether or not I define bachelors as existing because the set of all things that qualify for such a label is logically identical either way. However, since we can readily imagine a logically possible world that contains no bachelors, it immediately follows that we can likewise imagine a possible world that contains no bachelors that "exist." Again, this has to be the case because the two sets are still logically identical. Yet the very idea of a world without bachelors is quite literally the textbook definition of a world where bachelors don't exist in the first place. We therefore must conclude that things which exist as a matter of definition can, apparently, not exist!

This is where we get the famous philosophical principle that existence is not a predicate. It means that whenever we say a thing exists, we cannot possibly refer to some essential property of the thing itself. Rather, what we're really describing is a property of the objective reality in which this thing is allegedly contained. In fact, if you really want to get technical about things, the very phrase Bachelors are things that exist is not even a valid proposition to make in the first place. Rather, the correct phrasing is more like There exist bachelors, or The set of all bachelors is nonempty. That is how existence functions as a proper, logical operation, because that is how it is implicitly defined within first-order logic. There is no such thing as a set of "things that exist" but rather only sets of things that are either occupied or empty. Necessary existence is therefore not logically possible because it is logically incoherent to even talk about it in the first place.

Bear in mind now that all this practically boils down at the end of the day is the rather obvious principle that reality doesn't care how you define words. I could define myself as the undisputed King of America, but that does not mean I can just waltz up to the White House and expect everyone to start treating me like royalty. Christians can likewise define God as a thing that exists, but that does not magically require objective reality itself to contain anything worthy of that label. Yet that's exactly what Christian philosophers like Alvin Plantinga are trying to do whenever they describe God through this nonsensical property of necessary existence! So let's just cut through the bullshit for one second and state the obvious out loud:

Imagine a possible world where God does not exist.

Now ask yourself, was that sentence somehow utterly incomprehensible to you? Is there some formal contradiction buried in that claim we somehow missed? Does the very idea of objective reality itself get violated simply by our failure to insert a thing worthy of the label "God?"

No! Of course not! There is nothing incoherent about the proposition that God does not exist. Any attempt to force the issue as a matter of definition is, in and of itself, a logical impossibility. The very definition of objective reality itself is arguably just the collection of all things that persist independently of human say-so. And what are language definitions, if not the epitome of subjective mental constructs, asserted into being by literal human say-so? So when Christians go out of their way to inherently define God as a thing that necessarily exists, they're ironically forcing the concept of God directly into the realm of necessary NON-existence! Nothing exists necessarily because the very idea itself literally means "existence by definition."

On personal note, this is once again why I just have no respect for religious philosophers and apologists. I should seriously not have to explain to these people that you cannot just define things into existence. Yet here is Alvin Plantinga himself, the very cream of academic Christian philosophy, apparently failing to wrap his brain around this simple little concept. It's just inexcusable how grossly incompetent these people are. Their very best effort to prove God's existence is nothing but an inadvertent proof that God cannot logically exist at all! So until Christian apologists finally learn the difference between words and reality, I'm just going to keep treating them like the philosophical children that they are.

Is Intentionality a Cardinal Problem for Physicalism? By Keith Parsons

This response is based on the summary by Joel Steinmetz of an article by John Haldane:

http://guweb2.gonzaga.edu/faculty/calhoun/socratic/Steinmetz-Problem_of_Intentionality.pdf

It is not based on the not the original article by Haldane, so my remarks here must be regarded as provisional and informal. Still, I would like to address a few points.

Haldane's argument, as presented here, is somewhat confusing because of the terminology employed. The key terms are "extension," "intension (with an 's')," and "intentionality." It is easy to get confused with such similar-sounding terms. The "extension" of a predicate is the set of objects picked out by that predicate. Thus "cat" picks out the set of all felines. The "intension" is the principle or criterion whereby those objects to which the predicate applies are picked out. In

other words, the intension specifies the conditions that must be met for the predicate to be correctly applied to the object. For instance, we identify the items picked out by the term "weekday" as {x | x is a day of the week and x is neither Saturday nor Sunday}.

When a term refers to a single object, like the White House, the extension of the term will be the object itself. The intension will be any concept that picks out that object, such as "the residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C.," or "The official residence of the sitting President of the United States." "Intentionality," on the other hand, refers to the "aboutness" property of conscious states. Thoughts are about objects, whether those objects exist or not. Thus, I can think about a golden mountain just as easily as Pike's Peak. Philosophers therefore say that conscious states like believing, wishing, hoping, etc. have "intentional" objects, i.e. objects that might exist or not.

A sentence establishes an extensional context when any co-extensive term may be substituted for another without changing the truth value of the sentence. Thus, "Barack Obama resides at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue" is true and "Barack Obama lives at the official residence of U.S. Presidents" is also true because the extension of "1600 Pennsylvania Avenue" and "official residence of U.S. Presidents" have the same extension, namely, the White House.

A sentence establishes an intensional context when you cannot necessarily substitute once concept for another—where both concepts pick out the same object—without changing the truth value of the sentence. For instance, "Sam believes that the successor of George W. Bush lives in the White House" may be true whereas "Sam believes that the 44th President of the U.S. lives in the White House" may not be true because Sam knows that Barack Obama is the successor of George W. Bush but does not know that he is the 44th President. Sam does not know that the concept "successor of George W. Bush" and the concept "44th President of the U.S." pick out the same individual, Barack Obama.

OK, so what is the relationship between extension, intension (with an 's') and intentionality (with a 't')? I think it is this: Any language that meaningfully describes an intrinsically intentional state, one where a mental state is directed towards an intentional object, will necessarily be expressed by sentences that establish an intensional context. Those sentences will describe the intentional state in terms of beliefs, meanings, and concepts, not in terms of the objects picked out by those concepts (which might not exist), and, in particular not in terms of physical objects or physical properties. Thus, to describe my intentional state of thinking about the Eifel Tower, the account will not be in terms of the Eifel Tower itself but how it appears or seems to me.

Haldane's argument then seems to be that, in principle, physical descriptions must all be expressible in extension-language, i.e. in terms of the objects picked out, their relations, and properties. There can be no irreducibly intensional contexts in physical science. Physical science must describe in terms of what is, not in terms of concepts or meanings or presentational aspects. Of course, science does frequently employ concept-language, for instance every time it gives a definition, e.g. according to my Dictionary of Science (Brockhampton Press, 1997), Deuterium is defined as: "naturally occurring heavy isotope of hydrogen, mass number 2, (one proton and one neutron)…" This sentence states the criterion whereby something counts as deuterium, and

employs concepts such as “mass number,” and “isotope.” Therefore the definition of “deuterium” employs intensional language.

However, I think that Haldane’ point is that any physical account, description, or definition must be, in principle, a third-person description in terms of physical objects, their properties, relations, interactions, etc. and not in terms of first-person accounts of how things appear, seem, feel, etc. Further, he asserts that there are intrinsically intentional states, states that can only be expressed in terms of their presentational aspects (how they appear, seem, feel, etc.) and not in terms of the properties of physical objects, such as neurotransmitters, synapses, etc. The upshot, as he sees it, is that there are some real states, namely intentional states, that cannot be adequately described—fully and without residue—in physical terms. Therefore, physicalism, as a comprehensive metaphysical theory, a theory about the ultimate terms of ontology, cannot be correct. There will be some real states, viz. intentional states, that, in principle, cannot be described in third-person, extensional, physical terms.

I agree with Haldane and Searle that there are intrinsically intentional states and that intrinsically intentional states cannot be reduced to purely third-person, extensional, object-language terms. However, for several reasons, I am not convinced by his argument.

First, note that explanatory physical models do not have to use only physical terms. Most obviously, explanatory physical models use the language of mathematics, and mathematical language refers to nothing physical and derives none of its meaning from anything physical. Indeed, the universal applicability of mathematics is due to the fact that its terms and meanings are abstracted from any particular context or reference. Consider E = mc2. It refers to physical terms such as energy, light, and mass, but the equation also employs mathematical concepts such as equality and multiplication. Mathematical equality and multiplication are not found in the physical world, nor does their meaning depend on physical states. Therefore, Haldane’s apparent assumption that physical accounts can employ only physical terms seems quite wrong.

Perhaps Haldane would say that he means only to insist that there can be no irreducible references to meanings, conceptual contents, or presentational aspects in physical theory. Maybe he is right that physical theory currently does not countenance such intentional terms, at least not irreducibly, in physical accounts. Yet Haldane seems to be invoking an essentialist and ahistorical criterion about the kind of language that physical science “must” use. From a more historical perspective, the kind of language that physical science employs evolves over time. For Aristotle, talk about natural place and final causes was fine. Newton banished natural place and final causes. Newton also banished talk about the causes of gravitational attraction with his famous “Hypotheses non fingo” dismissal. Einstein brought back a physical account of gravitation in terms of the warping of space-time by massive bodies.

As Kuhn pointed out long ago, the language acceptable to scientific communities is something that changes over time. The language changes as needed to accommodate our best current understanding of the world. The most relevant question to ask, then, is not whether current scientific language can describe intentional states. Suppose it cannot. So what? The question to ask is whether intentional states are something that can be accomplished by physical systems. That

is, can a physical thing, for instance, think about a cat? Is "thinking about" something that a physical thing can do? If it turns out that it is, then scientific language will—because it must—adjust to that reality. Science will have to begin using intentional language as well as physical object language if it turns out that some physical objects can have intentional states. If Haldane wants to rule this out, he cannot appeal to language. He has to appeal to the physical world and show that, no matter how a physical thing is organized, it cannot, say, think about a cat. It is not clear at all how Haldane could even begin to show that no physical system can have intentional states. At bottom, there is no basis for saying what the physical world can do than by observing what it does do.

In conclusion, I would like to propose that physicalism not be understood, as Haldane apparently considers it, as the effort to describe everything exclusively in terms of extensional states. Rather, I would characterize physicalism as the thesis that all phenomena have physical causes, in other words, that physical models can, in principle, explain all occurrences. Physical models explain in terms of physical entities, forces, relations, interactions, etc. However, the language that physical models employ will have to encompass not only what explains but what is explained. If what is explained is something not expressible in extensional, physical-object language, then the relevant physical model will have to incorporate the language needed to capture that actual cause-and-effect relationship. Scientific language cannot determine the world. It must be determined by the world, and if the world is such that physical things can have intentional states, then to explain this fact science will have to develop the language necessary to do so.

Why Survival is Metaphysically Impossible by Raymond D. Bradley

1. THE CHESHIRE CAT FALLACY: "A GRIN WITHOUT A CAT"

Many of Lewis Carroll's stories for children are pregnant with philosophical lessons for those of us who like to think about the nature of reality and of our status within it. His story of the Cheshire Cat, who keeps performing disappearing tricks to the bewilderment of Alice, is a case in point. Alice says: "I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy." "All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone. "Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin," thought Alice; "but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!" (Carroll, 1865, pp. 93–94) I'm going to argue that the idea of a human mind existing without a body is just as absurd as the idea of a grin existing without a cat's face that has that grin. And for roughly the same reasons:

• Human bodies and cats have a totally different mode of existence from

facial expressions like grins or scowls, and from those collections of mental properties (intelligence, willpower, consciousness, etc.) that we call minds;

• Human bodies and cats belong to the category of physical substances or entities, whereas things like facial expressions and mental properties belong to the category of properties or attributes, and so can exist only so long as their physical bearers exist;

• Just as a facial expression emerges when the facial parts of the cat are configured in a certain sort of way, so mental properties emerge when the constituent parts of a biological organism—especially its brain—are configured in certain sorts of ways. Note that I said only that the reasons are "roughly" the same. This is because minds don't exist as single things like grins. A grin is a member of the class of properties that we call facial expressions. But a mind is not a member of the class of properties that we call mental properties. Rather, the mind possessed by a given individual is itself the class of mental properties of that individual. In other words, the term "mind" is an umbrella term for the class of mental properties that an individual happens to possess. Or so I shall argue. That said, the analogy between grins without cats and minds without bodies is sound. The absurdity of the one idea parallels the absurdity of the other. Both commit what I call the Cheshire Cat fallacy—a fallacy that is an amalgam of two others: the fallacy of reification and a fallacy of category misallocation. (More on those later.) In what follows, I first clear the conceptual way for, and then sketch, an emergence theory of mind (i.e., of mental properties). It is a wholly materialistic theory, one that rejects any form of mind-body dualism. It precludes the possibility that one survives one's bodily death. First, however, we need to take the measure of the rival dualist worldview.

2. TWO MAIN ARGUMENTS FOR SUBSTANCE DUALISM

2.1 An Appeal to the Logic of Identity and Difference The most powerful case that can ever be made for the truth of a claim is to show it to be an instance of a logical truth, or the consequence of applying a logical truth to true premises. A case in point is the use made by a number of dualists of the logical truth dubbed by American logician Willard van Quine (1908–2000) Leibniz's law of the "indiscernibility of identicals" (Quine, 1953/1971, p. 139).2 It states:

If object x = object y, then x has all the properties that y has and vice versa. Now the indiscernibility of identicals is logically equivalent to what may be called the nonidentity of discernibles, namely:

If object x lacks a property that object y possesses, then x and y are not identical but different. It is to the latter form of Leibniz's law that French philosopher, mathematician, and physicist René Descartes (1596–1650) implicitly appeals in his classic arguments for dualism. (An implicit appeal to the same logical principle is also found in Socrates and Plato, but it is Descartes' formulation that has become classic) We don't need to go into the details of Cartesian exegesis in order to understand how his arguments go. The seventeenth century was the heyday of modern science. Sir William Harvey (1578–1657) had discovered the mechanisms of the body's circulation, and medical science was being advanced by undertaking dissections and autopsies of the human body under the critical gaze of the intellectual elite of the time. Now imagine Descartes or one of his followers attending just such an occasion. And imagine, further, that our Cartesian had prepared in advance a box containing little cards on pins with labels like "heart," "liver," "spleen," "gall bladder," and so on, with a view to learning what's what by labeling each organ as it is revealed. All goes well and measurements are made of the size, weight, and location of each organ as it is exposed to view. Yet one label remains in the box. It reads "mind." Where is it to be put? A puzzle arises. Everyone present agrees that we do indeed have minds. Otherwise, we couldn't think about things like the location of minds. And the person whose body is being dissected—an outstanding academic who had bequeathed his body to science—certainly had a distinguished mind before his

death. Yet after his death no spaces were found in his cadaver for his mind to have occupied. So it couldn't have occupied space. And his body weighed exactly the same after his death as it did before death. So it couldn't have had any weight. The conclusion seemed obvious. The mind—it was agreed—is just as real as each of the material objects that comprise the mechanism of the body, yet it is an entity quite unlike each of those others insofar as it lacks size, weight, and precise spatial location. It must, therefore, be an immaterial object, a ghostly sort of entity that inhabits the material body but is not part of that body. Generalizing, our Cartesian concludes—by implicit appeal to the nonidentity of discernibles—that since it is true that minds lack the properties that are essential to material things, minds must be entirely different sorts of things from material bodies, and must in principle be logically capable of independent existence in the sense that there is no contradiction in supposing one to exist but the other not. We can, of course, come to the same argument from the point of view of the properties that minds possess—such as consciousness, thinking, sensation, intelligence, creativity, subjective awareness, willpower, emotion, and so on—but that simple material particles do not. Once again, the conclusion seems obvious: minds and material objects are totally different sorts of substances. On the face of it, the argument from Leibniz's principle prepares the way for dualists to make a case for personal survival. Descartes acknowledged the finality of our earthly bodies at death. He wouldn't have demurred from the saying: "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." Nor would he have objected to the current view that the long-term fate of our bodies is the scattering of our composite atoms, the reabsorption of some of these into other organisms—even other humans—and an ultimate sharing in whatever cosmological fate the universe has in store for itself. But he would have objected to the view that that's all that there is to us as persons. While we are alive, he would insist, we are composite entities— both bodies and minds—and the nonsurvival of the former doesn't entail the nonsurvival of the latter. Using the term "soul" as a virtual synonym for "mind," Descartes therefore maintains: "Thus this 'I,' that is to say, the soul through which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body and is even easier to know than the body, and even if there were no body at all, it would not cease to be all that it is" (1637/1998, p. 19). Whether or not the incorporeal mind is identical with the incorporeal soul may be left to those who claim to know about such matters. But it is of little practical import for the issue of personal survival. For if one is to survive one's bodily death, the soul must at least be accompanied by one's mind. A mindless (unthinking and uncomprehending) soul would have no more significance for one's afterlife than the survival of one's cadaver in a cryonic freezer. In what follows I shall, initially at least, follow tradition in using the terms "mind" and "soul" more or less interchangeably.

2.2 An Appeal to the Noncogitative Nature of Matter

Across the Channel from France, Descartes' younger contemporary, the English philosopher and medical researcher John Locke (1632–1704), accepted the dualist point of view and gave it added impetus by arguing for the metaphysical impossibility of unthinking matter producing things that think. In his Essay Concerning Human Understanding, under the heading "A system of incogitative matter cannot be cogitative," he argues: "For unthinking particles of matter, however put together, can have nothing added to them but a new relation of position, which it is impossible should give thought and knowledge to them" (Locke, 1690/2008, p. 198).7 Locke's argument is not based on a review of the science of his day. It is not an empirical argument, but the conclusion of a wholly

a priori one. It begins a few pages earlier when he likens what he calls the "manifest contra Why diction" involved in supposing that matter might be produced out of nothing, to the absurdity involved in supposing that thinking intelligent beings might be produced out of incogitative matter. Just as it is impossible, he claims, for matter to come out of nothing, so it is equally impossible for mind to come out of matter. Locke's argument, taken together with the application of Leibniz's law, constitutes a powerful case for substance dualism, one that continues to daunt many would-be materialists of our day. We will need to get to grips with both if we're to defend a materialist view of the universe and of our status within it.

3. A HOST OF PROBLEMS FOR SUBSTANCE DUALISM

3.1 The Inexplicability of Mind-Brain Dependence

In order for the mind or soul to survive one's bodily death, it must be independent of the body or any of its organs, such as the brain. Why, then, does the state of one's mind, before death, depend so manifestly on the state of one's body, and on the state of one's brain in particular? That the mind does depend on the body can be shown by countless examples, of which just a handful will suffice to make the point:

1. A blow to the head can deprive one of consciousness.

2. Consumption of alcohol or drugs can change one's perceptions.

3. Changes to the relevant sensory organs, or to certain areas of the brain, can deprive one of the associated sensory experiences.

4. Certain changes to the brain cause Alzheimer's disease and deprive one of normal mental abilities.

5. Mutation of one or more genes can cause mental disorders.

The primary problem for a substance dualist is to explain why, if minds are ontologically independent9 of bodies and their states, these causal relationships and dependencies should occur; and to explain the "mechanisms" by which they occur. Any explanation solely in terms of physical or biochemical laws is ruled out from the outset, since nothing counts as a physical law unless it relates physical phenomena; and ditto for biochemical laws. And any generalization that we make correlating the physical phenomena with their mental outcomes is merely a recognition of the dependencies that we have been illustrating. It can't count as a causal explanation. The manifest dependency of changes in one's mental states on changes in bodily states while we are alive leaves the dualist facing another puzzle. Namely, what would or could bring about changes in one's mental states when one is dead? Try to imagine for a moment that you are a disembodied soul existing somewhere or other in the hereafter. What could bring about changes in what you see, hear, feel, or smell, once you are deprived of the corresponding bodily organs and brain centers? Would you fail to have such experiences, and fail to be conscious of changes in your otherworldly environment? Would your mental life be inert?

3.2 The Inexplicability of Mental Causation

Nothing seems more obvious than that mental events can bring about physical ones. Examples abound, from the most mundane:

• My arm moves when I decide to move it. to the most momentous:

• Einstein's thought experiments over a century ago led him to formulate, then put down on paper, his E = mc2 equation, which—when recycled again and again through the minds of countless mathematicians, physicists, and engineers—led to one of the most earth-shaking events in human history, the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and subsequent developments such as the international nuclear industry, and the disasters at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima. These causal transactions from mind to matter are as inexplicable, for the dualist, as are those the other way around. For, by hypothesis, the two-way causal transactions that are supposed to bridge the gap do not belong to either side of the ontological gap; they are neither mental nor physical. Faced with this predicament, traditional dualists "got into fairyland," as David Hume (1711–1776) put it in section VII, part I, paragraph 57 of his Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (1748/2000). They invoked God to do the trick. Some, like Nicolas Malebranche (1638–1715), said that God got into the act all of the time. Whenever a physical event seemed to cause a mental one, or vice versa, God would choose that occasion to bring about the appropriate seeming effect. Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) seemed to think that such occasionalism, as it came to be known, gave God too much to do. How much wiser and more efficient it would be for God to simply synchronize the two sets from the outset of creation. Hence Leibniz's doctrine of preestablished harmony between the two worlds: the material and the mental.

3.3 The Violation of Scientific Laws

It didn't take long for Descartes and his successors to recognize the problem of fitting the dualist hypothesis into the science of physics. Descartes envisaged the mind as being located within the pineal gland where it comes into "contact" with the so-called "vital spirits," and brings about changes in the physical world. Yet it had long been suspected by physicists that the total amount of energy in the physical universe is constant.10 How, then, can the mind or soul affect it? The Cartesians' early answer was to acknowledge that the soul couldn't in fact change the total quantity of energy, but to insist that it could nevertheless alter the direction of motion of the vital spirits, and thereby effect changes in other parts of the body. But, as Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) has observed (1946, p. 538), later Cartesians such as Geulinex (1624–1669), Malebranche, and Spinoza (1632–1677) had to abandon this part of Descartes' theory, too. Discovery of the physical law known as the conservation of momentum dictated also that the direction of motion in any given direction is constant. These days, at least six conservation laws are recognized as fundamental to physics. The science of physics, in short, leaves no room for nonphysical entities to bring about changes in the physical universe. This is sometimes referred to as the causal closure of the physical world. So here's a dilemma for dualists: Either minds or souls make a difference to the physical world or they don't. If they do make a difference, then the science of physics must be fundamentally flawed, despite no such flaw yet being detected. If they don't make a difference, what's the practical significance of having a mind or soul? Moreover, if they don't make a difference, why are we under what I'll call "the Obama illusion" that we can change the world?

3.4 Minds as Miracle-Workers

Those dualists who found it hard to swallow God's intervention as postulated by the doctrines of occasionalism and preestablished harmony came up with a third supernaturalist hypothesis. Minds themselves—whatever their genesis— are nonnatural (supernatural) entities capable of intervening in the natural world. The problem then, however, is that we ourselves are made into miracleworkers. For any change that our mind brings about in the physical world would satisfy the commonly accepted definition of a miracle: it would be a violation of a law of nature by a supernatural agent. But do dualists really want to conclude that every time we do something as a result of a mental act, we are performing a miracle? That would make the notion of miracles utterly banal and commonplace, put us into competition with God himself, and deprive reputed earthly miracle-workers of the past—Moses, Jesus, and miscellaneous saints—of their unique status.

3.5 Problems about Our Embryological and Developmental Histories

If, as dualists suppose, the mind or soul of a living individual is an entity that comes to inhabit that individual's body, then there must be some determinate time when it takes up its habitation. But that hypothesis spawns many imponderable questions: questions for which no nonarbitrary answer can be given; questions that cannot in principle be weighed or assessed in light of any conceivable evidence. Does someone's soul preexist in the supposed supernatural domain before it takes up habitation in a particular human body? If so, does it have any say in the matter of where it is to go? Or is its earthly habitation assigned by God? Does it, perhaps, come into existence at the moment when a particular sperm and ovum unite to form a zygote? Or does it wait until the zygote divides to form a blastomere? Most conservative Christians believe that God implants the soul in the zygote at the moment of conception. But many religious progressives believe that this occurs some time during the 26^{th} week of pregnancy. Who's right? And what sort of evidence would lead us to decide one way or the other? And there are other imponderable questions to be asked. For we do know that the sort of person one is to become is determined to a great extent by the genes of both parents. So, if the soul also is to play any part in determining what one is going to become, it becomes plausible to suppose that an individual's soul is also inherited from both parents. Do I, then, inherit half of my soul from each parent? If so, what are the mechanisms of soul-inheritance? Does a soul-analogue of the biological process of gamete-producing meiosis occur? These questions sound uncomfortably like the question, "How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?"

3.6 Problems about our Evolutionary Histories

The intellectual stress-tests on substance dualism become even more severe when we seek plausible, well-reasoned answers to questions about the evolutionary origins of minds or souls. As with the developmental history of each individual, so also with the evolutionary history of the human species or its ancestors, questions arise with regard to the temporal beginnings of soulembodiment (sometimes called ensoulment). According to substance dualism, there must have been a time before which souls or minds appeared in the cosmos, and a time after souls took up their habitat in human bodies, or the bodies of their evolutionary ancestors. It's unfair to ask for a specific time, of course. But it is reasonable to raise questions as to whether souls are supposed to

have arrived, or arisen, before or after Homo sapiens split off from our evolutionary cousins, say the Neanderthals. If before, then Neanderthals too may be presumed to have had souls that religious believers can look forward to meeting in the afterlife. If not until after, then no one will have that pleasure, either in Heaven or Hell. Pope John Paul II contented himself, in his 1996 message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, with giving his imprimatur to the theory of evolution on one proviso: that there be some time or other when God began inserting immaterial souls into the hitherto purely material universe. But the Pope forbore speculation about the time even to within a few million years. He also neglected to say whether implanting souls into our distant forebears was a onetime event such that some unspecified process of soul-inheritance (and, perhaps, soul-mutation?) took over thereafter, or whether God has had to do it for each individual descendant thereafter. Perhaps some successor Pope, priest, or theologian will reveal the answers to these questions in the years to come. But this is the least of our embodiment problems. Minds, on the substance dualist's account, are believed to be the bearers of mental properties such as intelligence, inventiveness, consciousness, emotion, etc. But this belief puts stress on the assumption that minds and souls are identical, or that they always accompany one another. For it must surely be acknowledged that humans are not the only sentient creatures to exhibit some degree of intelligence, inventiveness, consciousness, emotion, and the like. Are we to conclude, then, that some nonhuman creatures too have minds, at least in rudimentary form? And if so, are we to conclude also that such creatures have souls, or rudimentary ones? Or are minds and souls really quite different from each other after all? And is this why the expression "body, mind, and soul" trips so readily from our tongues? The quandary for dualists can be presented more formally as an inconsistent tetrad, i.e., a set of four propositions any three of which entail the denial of the fourth. Consider the following:

1. Mental properties belong to minds, not to bodies or bodily organs.

2. Minds and souls are identical or always accompany one another.

3. Some nonhuman creatures exhibit mental properties.

4. No nonhuman creatures have souls.

To deny (1) would mean that mental properties might belong to bodily objects, not to ethereal minds. To deny (2) would mean that we are really on to something ontologically significant when we speak of bodies, minds, and souls as if we humans possess all three of them. To deny (3) would be to deny a host of empirically well-ascertained facts, such as: that many animals only distantly related to us on the evolutionary tree are conscious of changes in their environment; that many nonhuman animals such as dolphins display consciousness, inventiveness, emotion, memory, and intelligence; that some of our closer evolutionary cousins such as bonobos and chimpanzees can perform some intelligence-demanding tests better than most humans; and that some of these species have developed social and political structures. To deny (4) would be to occasion awkward questions for religion. If bonobos and chimpanzees, for example, have souls as well as minds, will they join human souls in an afterlife? Which of the four alternatives will our substance dualist deny in order to preserve the minimal requirement of rationality, namely, noncontradiction? Or

will some see these questions as shaking the presuppositional foundations of their whole dualist ontology? The flood of imponderables increases.

3.7 Which Stage of the Soul or Mind Survives?

Our minds change and mature during our lives. And our mental states vary from moment to moment every day that we're alive. Will it be the mind or soul that you happen to have at the moment of death that survives? What if a fetus dies while in the womb? Or if a child dies uneducated? Or if you die in your dotage? Will persons suffering from Down's syndrome, Alzheimer's disease, or paranoia carry on in that condition in the afterlife? Saint Paul—for seemingly good theological reasons—emphasized the doctrine of bodily resurrection: that we survive with new, reconstituted bodies. Yet clearly there's equally great need for those surviving in a spiritual world to undergo reconstituted minds. And so far as I know, no spiritual authority—no Pope, priest, or theologian—has yet ventured any view as to how that might be effected. Besides, the idea of an individual entering the great hereafter with some sort of newly perfected mind raises immediate problems for the issue of personal identity: how could one's mind, before being reconstituted, be numerically identical with one's mind after processing? In what sense is a newly retreaded tire the same as the old, worn-out one?

3.8 Where are our Disembodied Souls Supposed to Survive?

As for the question of where our minds or souls might end up, I can do no better than to quote my introduction to another chapter contributed to this volume:

Suppose that at the time of your death, you could leave your mortal coil behind. Where do you think that you—your essential self, soul, or spirit— would go? Try to imagine it in concrete detail. How fast would you travel, and by what means of propulsion? In which direction would you go, and how far? How do you think of your ultimate destination? As some vaguely conceived "other side" from which you could make guest appearances at the behest of earthly mediums? Would you fancy hanging around in dark alleys or haunted houses? Or taking up habitation in another human body—an embryo, perhaps? Or would residence in some other animal content you, a monkey or a cow or an earthworm? Would it leave earth altogether and drift off into outer space to take up residence, perhaps, on a distant planet in the Pleiades? Would it go off to a totally different kind of realm, a nonphysical, immaterial, spiritual one? Do you conceive of yourself—your true self, that is—as being destined for an eternity in Heaven or Hell? If you want to think more about the Hell option, read my other contribution to this volume. Otherwise, just ponder the preceding imponderables. Plus what follows.

4. THE ARGUMENT FROM LEIBNIZ'S LAW PRESUPPOSES A CATEGORY MISALLOCATION

When a hypothesis generates a host of imponderable questions, we would do well to examine its presuppositions lest any of them are mistaken. What, then, are the presuppositions of mind-body dualism? Chief among them is the presupposition that both minds and bodies belong to the category of individual objects, or substances. It is this presupposition that enables dualists to appeal, explicitly or implicitly, to Leibniz's law and conclude that, because they are such different

kinds of individuals, objects, or substances, minds or souls can survive even when bodies don't. Our normal ways of speaking lend support to this way of thinking about minds and bodies. For the terms "mind" and "body" are both nouns, and nouns—some of us were taught from childhood—are names of things. The conclusion comes readily. Both "mind" and "body" seem to be appropriate substitutions for the individual variables "x" and "y" in Leibniz's law of nonidentity of discernibles, namely:

If individual x has any property that individual y lacks, then x and y are different individuals. So it seems entirely logical to reason that since bodies have the property of being spatially extended, while minds lack that property, they must be entirely different kinds of objects. Now the lure of language that leads us to think this way about the primary mentalistic term "mind" can lead us to conclude, by analogous reasoning, that secondary mentalistic terms such as "intelligence," "memory," "emotion," "volition," "understanding," "creativity," "contemplation," and " son" also stand for different individual things and that each of them is distinct from the body. Not only can language lead to this conclusion, but historically it has. As Locke noted, each of these secondary terms was used by Scholastic philosophers before and during his day to refer to what they called "faculties." And such talk continues in our own day in some quarters. But, as Locke pointed out:

[T]his way of speaking of faculties has led many into a confused notion of so many distinct agents within us, which had their several provinces and authorities, and did command, obey, and perform several actions, as so many distinct beings. (Locke, 1690/1947, p. 143)

4.1 The Fallacy of Reification

Locke is drawing our attention to linguistically generated instances of what's called the "fallacy of reification." One is guilty of that fallacy when one treats an abstract noun as the name of a real thing that is capable of independent existence. It is a fallacy that is memorably illustrated in chapter 7 of Carroll's Through the Looking Glass. Talking to Alice, the King says:

"[The Messengers have] both gone to the town. Just look along the road, and tell me if you can see either of them." "I see nobody on the road," said Alice. "I only wish I had such eyes," the King remarked in a fretful tone. "To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light." (1871/1897, pp. 139–140) As contemporary philosopher Peter Heath, in The Philosopher's Alice, comments:

Because nobody functions grammatically very like somebody, there is a temptation to believe that it is the name of a peculiar, diaphanous sort of somebody, who is then unnecessarily added to the world's inhabitants. In such a way does the language of abstraction darken counsel, corrupt communications, and beget bad philosophy, a theme much insisted on by Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and their many modern successors. (1974, p. 201) Thus Locke, in the passage quoted above, is pointing out that the Scholastics' error was to reify such abstract nouns as "consciousness," "intelligence," "memory," "emotion," "volition," "understanding," "creativity," "contemplation," and "reason," thus treating them as "distinct agents within us."

4.2 Resisting the Reifying Lure of Language

I have a general piece of advice to offer here: In thinking about such questions as "What is the mind?" "What is intelligence?" or "What is consciousness?"— any question involving the name of some nonphysical abstraction— we do well to avoid the noun and concentrate instead on the corresponding verb, adverb, or adjective. For instance, the question "What is consciousness?" about which so many neuroscientists and philosophers currently seem so deeply puzzled, is better replaced by questions like "What is it to be conscious?" (the verb), "What is it to do something consciously?" (the adverb), or "What is it for someone to be in a conscious state?" (the adjective). It then becomes clear that the abstract noun "consciousness" isn't the name of some elusive thing; it isn't the name of a thing at all. To be conscious is to be aware; to do something consciously is to do it while being aware of what one is doing; to be in a conscious state is to be in a general state of awareness of one's self or surroundings. Likewise for other mentalistic nouns.

4.3 Dualistic Consequences of Reifying Mentalistic Terms

Dualists, however, succumbed to the reifying temptation. Their consequent problems are twofold. First, each of these secondary mentalistic terms, when thought of as standing for a distinct agent within us, generates its own set of imponderable questions, a set that mirrors those noted earlier for the primary term "mind." Take the notion of consciousness, for instance. If we reify the abstract noun "consciousness," it will seem appropriate for us to ask questions about the interdependence of bodily states and consciousness, about consciousness and its causal efficacy in a world governed by conservation laws, about the beginnings of consciousness in the embryological and evolutionary stories of individuals and species, and about which stage of our consciousness is supposed to survive one's bodily death. Second, if we think of intelligence, volition, consciousness, and so on as distinct entities—"distinct agents within us"—then dualism is threatened from still another quarter. It will no longer suffice to think of ourselves solely in dualistic terms. We would need to conceive of ourselves as composed of bodies, minds, plus all of these other entities as well. And then the hypothesis that we survive our bodily deaths becomes even more implausible. Since Leibniz's law dictates that minds are different things from consciousness, intelligence, emotion, volition, and so on, it follows that all of these other entities will have to survive as well as your mind or soul. After all, consciousness, intelligence, memory, creativity, etc., are not even coextensive across the animal kingdom, let alone within individual humans. The question then arises as to what would hold all of these "distinct agents" together to survive as you in the next world?

All of these additional imponderable problems, we have seen, are generated by the presupposition that abstract mentalistic terms, when reified, can legitimately be substituted for the individual variables x and y in Leibniz's law. But what if this presupposition is mistaken? What if we prohibit reifying mentalistic terms, or take them to be subject to the strictures of Leibniz's law? What if minds don't belong to the general category of objects or substances— as clearly bodies do—but to some other general category?

4.4 Allocation to Ontological Categories

In asking this question, I am using "category" as a philosophical term of art that traces its roots back to Aristotle (384–322 BC), who arguably used the term to refer to the highest genera of

entities that we need to recognize if we are to give an account of the constituents and fabric of reality. True, in his Categoriae Aristotle spends a lot of time concentrating on which combinations of words make sense and which do not. But his intent seems to be that of ensuring that we use them in ways that conform to correct ontological beliefs. Commenting on Aristotle's treatment of categories, Porphyry (234–305 AD) wrote, "As things are, so are the expressions which primarily indicate them [emphasis added]" (Needham, 1978, p. 162). In what follows I shall emulate what I take to be Aristotle's primary ontological intent, but will offer a somewhat shorter list of ontological categories, to aid our thinking about the issues before us.

My select list of ontological categories includes:

1. Individual objects or substances (capable of independent existence in the sense defined in note 9);

2. Properties, attributes, or qualities (inhering in, or belonging to, and incapable of existing independently of, individual objects or substances);

3. Relations (holding between individual objects, substances, states of affairs, and events);

4. States of affairs (individuals being propertied or being related to one another);

5. Events (temporal changes in states of affairs);

6. Classes or sets (of instances of each of the foregoing categories).

The categories in my list are neither exclusive of one another nor exhaustive in listing the constituents of reality.18 And within each category, there are (of course) many possible subcategories, classes, and subclasses. In light of this list of ontological categories, we can return to my question. In effect, I am asking what happens if we conceive of mentalistic terms as referring not to items in category 1, but to items in category 2? The answer is simple: Leibniz's law turns out to have been misapplied, and once we realize that, all of our imponderables go away. In thinking of minds and other mentalistic items as being individual objects or substances, dualists are guilty not just of the fallacy of reification but also of the (consequent) fallacy of category misallocation.

4.5 Locke's Partial Solution to the Category Misallocation

In the paragraph from which the "distinct agent" passage quoted above is extracted, Locke refers explicitly to the mentalistic terms "understanding" and "will," and criticizes the Scholastics' presupposition that they are names of "real beings," i.e., of items in category 1. He analyzes them instead as being the names of what he calls "powers" (abilities, capacities, dispositions)— i.e., as the names of properties, of the items in category 2. What's more, his recommended reallocation of "understanding" and "will" to the category of properties, not things, enables him to avoid the sorts of questions that we have called "imponderable" and that he calls "improper." The question of whether we have free will is a case in point. Given that volition, on his analysis, is a property, and that being free is also a property, he argues:

Liberty belongs not to the will.—If this be so (as I imagine it is), I leave it to be considered, whether it may not help to put an end to that long agitated, and I think unreasonable, because unintelligible, question, viz., Whether man's will be free or no? For if I mistake not, it follows from what I have said, that the question is altogether improper: and it is as insignificant to ask whether a man's will be free, as to ask whether his sleep be swift, or his virtue square. Liberty, which is but a power [property] belongs only to agents, and cannot be an attribute [property] or modification of the will, which is also but a power [property]. (Locke, 1690/2008, p. 145) Resuming the argument a few paragraphs later, he concludes:

"But to the agent or man.—To return then to the inquiry about liberty, I think the question is not proper, whether the will be free, but whether a man be free" (Locke, 1690/2008, p. 148). The essence of Locke's argument is this. To talk about the will is to talk about a property of a person; to talk about being free is to talk about another property of a person; properties always belong to individual objects or substances, such as agents or men. To ask whether the property of being free belongs to another property, namely, the ability to act, is therefore as absurd as to ask whether the property of sleeping has another property, namely, that of being swift or slow, or to ask whether the property of being virtuous has the property of being square or circular. Locke's allocation of "understanding" and "will" to the category of properties can be generalized to embrace the other secondary mentalistic notions of consciousness, intelligence, creativity, etc. And if we then follow him in drawing the conclusion that all of these mentalistic terms refer to properties of men as agents, we rid ourselves of all of the imponderable, "improper" questions to which the rival category misallocations lead. However, despite Locke's insight in thinking of most mentalistic terms as referring to items in the category of properties rather than substances, he was unable to see his way clear to do so for all mentalistic terms. For him the exception was the primary abstract term "mind." When it comes to specifying the bearer of mentalistic properties like understanding and will, he speaks indifferently of this bearer as "the agent or man," or as "the mind" or "the soul." On his view, it is the body's inhabitant, the mind or soul, which has mental powers. In short, he is still operating within the conceptual framework of Cartesian dualism. It was left to Oxford philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1900–1976), two and a half centuries later, to show how talk of the mind could also be construed in terms of Lockean "powers"—more particularly, sets of properties—and thereby get rid of substance dualism altogether.

4.6 Ryle on Category Mistakes and "the Ghost in the Machine"

In his influential book The Concept of Mind , Ryle (1949/1963) argues that the Cartesian theory that humans are ghosts in bodily machines presupposes what he calls a "category mistake." His book has been widely, and I think justly, criticized on two main scores. First, he tends to set aside all ontological considerations and concentrate solely on linguistic ones. He was, after all, one of the leading figures of what was described as "the linguistic turn" in philosophy.20 Ryle's criterion for distinguishing one category from another is to see whether, if we replace one linguistic expression with another in a given sentence, we turn a meaningful sentence into what he calls an "absurdity." For example, if we replace the term "Socrates" in the sentence "Socrates is in bed" with the term "Saturday," we turn a meaningful sentence into a literal absurdity. Hence, he concludes, both the term "Socrates" and its referent, the person Socrates, belong to a different

category than the term “Saturday” and its referent, the day of the week after Friday. And anyone who thought that Saturday was the sort of thing that could be in bed would therefore, on Ryle’s account, be committing a “category mistake.” The problem with this account is that it trivializes the notion of a difference in categories, making it indistinguishable from that of a difference in classes. As J. J. C. Smart (1953) pointed out, if we replace “chair” with “table” in the sentence “The seat of my chair is hard,” we get an absurd statement. Yet if any two objects belong to the same category, surely tables and chairs do. Ryle’s absurdity-test is too profligate in its generation of socalled category mistakes. By contrast, my neo-Aristotelian account of categories gives the notion of a category mistake—what I prefer to call a category misallocation—an ontological bite. The category misallocation of which substance dualists are guilty involves a serious misdescription of the nature of reality itself. To borrow from Peter Heath’s The Philosopher’s Alice, they treat the term “mind” as “the name of a peculiar, diaphanous sort of entity, [which] is then unnecessarily added to the world’s inhabitants” (1974, p. 201). Second, Ryle conceived of mentalistic expressions like “knowledge,” “will,” “emotion,” “imagination,” and “intellect” as denoting properties that are best analyzed, he thinks, in behavioristic terms. True, he sought to distinguish his position from the cruder one of B. F. Skinner and his followers by calling it “logical behaviorism.” But behaviorism in general, whether logical or otherwise, has long been out of favor, and few philosophers (if any) would now come to its defense. I, for one, certainly would not.

4.7 Ryle’s Important Insight: To Have a Mind is to have a Set of Mental Properties

Neither of these criticisms, however, should distract us from recognizing what I see as Ryle’s most important contribution to the theory of mind: his account of what it is to have a mind as distinct from the secondary mental properties that we normally ascribe to the mind. He puts it this way: “To talk of a person’s mind . . . is to talk of the person’s abilities, liabilities [dispositions] and inclinations to do and undergo certain sorts of things” (Ryle, 1949/ 1963, p. 190). Here abilities, liabilities, and inclinations—like Locke’s “powers”— are thought of as belonging to the category of properties. Ryle claimed that the expression “mind” is what he elsewhere called an “umbrella term,” i.e., a compendious word that designates a superset of concepts that all fall under a singly common category. To have a mind is not to have a certain sort of mental property. Rather, it is to have a certain set of such properties. On this view, the concept mind is an abstract entity—a set belonging to ontological category 6, a set whose members or instances are mental properties belonging to ontological category 2. I first advanced this reconstrual of Ryle’s main theses in The Concept of Mind in several discussions with him when I was teaching in Oxford in 1961. He then agreed that it afforded a sound ontological basis for his views without inviting the sorts of criticisms that had been voiced by Smart back in 1953. With or without his imprimatur, however, it is this Ryle inspired view of the matter that I now—some fifty years later—still think is correct and will advance in what follows.

4.8 Interim Summary

I began this essay with an analogy: that belief in the possibility of surviving one’s physical death is analogous to belief in the Cheshire Cat’s grin surviving the cat’s total disappearance. And I announced my intent to show:

• That a human mind, like the Cheshire Cat's grin, has a different mode of existence from its bearer, namely, a human body and a cat's body, respectively;

• That a mind, like a grin, is a property (or set of properties) of its bearer, and hence cannot continue to exist after its bearer does not;

• That the property of having a mind, like the property of having a grin, is one that emerges when the purely physical constituents of their respective bearers are appropriately configured.

I take myself to have accomplished the first two goals. It remains for me to argue for the emergence theory of mind and mental properties.

5. THE EMERGENCE OF "MINDS" FROM INCOGITATIVE MATTER

5.1 Locke's A Priori Argument

A besetting sin of many philosophers is to second-guess the outcome of experience. Such is the case with Locke's argument. Recall:

A system of incogitative matter cannot be cogitative. For unthinking particles of matter, however put together, can have nothing added to them but a new relation of position, which it is impossible should give thought and knowledge to them [considered collectively]. (Locke, 1690/2008, p. 198) Two things are clear about this passage. First, Locke is making an ontological claim—a claim about the nature of reality—not an epistemological claim about what we can know about reality. Second, his argument is a quite general one to the effect that, for any system made up of particles of matter, if the individual particles lack a property F, then it is impossible for the system itself to have the property F. Another instance of this argument is that employed by proponents of socalled intelligent design against their evolutionist foes. It is inconceivable, they argue, that material particles lacking the property of life should form a biological system that has that property. Life, they conclude, must be breathed into nonliving forms by God, just as—for most substance dualists like Locke—souls and minds can only be breathed into living man by God.

5.2 Locke's Argument Refuted by Counterexamples

The best way to refute an argument purporting to show that such and such a state of affairs S is impossible is to show that S is possible because it actually occurs. In short, the best refutation is by counterexample. Now there are literally innumerable examples of systems of individual things such as material particles that possess a property F when none of the individual constituents of that system have F. I'll cite just three from physical chemistry. (i) Let's start with atoms. The commonest and simplest atom in the cosmos is atomic hydrogen-1. Although individual atoms of hydrogen lack the properties of temperature, pressure, and flammability, an assembly of those atoms to form a volume of hydrogen gas does indeed have those properties. (ii) Turning now to molecules, although individual molecules of H_2O lack the property of liquidity, an assembly of such molecules to form a quantity of water is indeed liquid at normal pressure and temperature and has the dispositional property to freeze solid or vaporize as steam under different conditions of temperature and pressure. (iii) When we turn to hydrocarbons, the simplest organic compounds, we find that it is their structure, not just their multiple assembly, that determines the properties of

the whole compound substance. The constituents are only carbon and hydrogen, but these constituents can be arranged in straight chains, branched chains, or cyclic ones. And with each new concatenation there is a consequential difference in properties, many of which are lacking in the simpler constituents. Thus we get hydrocarbons with the properties of gases, like methane; liquid solvents like naptha; and more solid substances like tar. It makes sense to say that all of these properties are causal outcomes that emerge from their respective bases, i.e., their simpler constituents (none of which has such properties), when they are in concatenation with each other. Such emergent properties, then, are counterexamples to the general form of Locke's argument. And since he provides no special case for saying that cogitative properties like thinking and knowing are not among the class of emergent properties, we can conclude that Locke's argument is an aprioristic fraud. Locke should have known better. For his argument from incredulity would, if sound, undermine his own distinction between primary qualities and secondary qualities.

5.3 The Concept of Emergence Defined

For the sake of what follows I offer the following stipulative-cum-clarificatory definitions of "emergent property" and of what it is for a property to "emerge":

An emergent property is a kind of property that is possessed by a complex object, but not by the simpler objects that are its constituents. A property F emerges (temporally) from a state of affairs S1 just when the individuals that are constituents of S1 lack F and come to be arranged in a new and more complex state of affairs S2 that does have F. These definitions are clearly satisfied by the foregoing examples of temperature, pressure, flammability, and ability to solidify, vaporize, liquefy, and so on.

By way of contrast, it is easy to cite examples of properties that are not emergent with respect to the properties of their simpler constituents. A notable example is the property of mass. Consider, again, the example with which we began, namely, a volume of hydrogen gas. Both the gas, and each of its constituent atoms, has the property of mass. Indeed, the mass of the gas is the sum of the masses of the constituent hydrogen atoms. Mass is a nonemergent property of both. And mass, whenever it occurs as a property of an object (microphysical or macrophysical) anywhere in the universe retains its character as a nonemergent property. Other prima facie examples of nonemergent properties are electrical charge, spin, spatiality, and weight (a relational property).

5.4 Rival Concepts of Emergence

Unfortunately, over the past two decades the term "emergent property" has become a buzzword in science (especially in biology and neuroscience) and in philosophy (especially philosophy of mind). Not surprisingly, therefore, it has become associated in people's minds with a number of distinct but related concepts: issues regarding predictability versus unpredictability, for example, and issues about reductionism. In fact some philosophers have talked of emergence as if were best understood in terms of these other muddy concepts. But the concepts of predictability and reductionism are not only in need of disambiguation. They are primarily epistemological concepts (involving our knowledge of the world), whereas, as I see it, the concept of emergence has to do with the nature of the world itself. Worse still, attempts to define emergence in these sorts of ways have led some philosophers to question whether there are in fact any clear-cut cases of emergent

properties. My definition, by contrast, is grounded in clear-cut examples of properties that are emergent, and others that are not emergent. And it lends itself to simple empirical tests of whether a property is emergent or nonemergent.

5.5 The Ubiquitousness of Emergent Properties

There is nothing mysterious, let alone miraculous, about the notion of an emergent property as I have defined it. Arguably, the phenomenon of a complex object coming to have a property that its simpler constituents lack is ubiquitous throughout the cosmos. Thus it may be argued, plausibly, that when we pass from the consideration of the properties of substances and individual objects studied in physics and chemistry to those of the "higherorder" sciences of biochemistry, biology, physiology, neurophysiology, psychology, sociology, and economics, we are invariably confronted with examples of properties that can best be understood as emergent with respect to, and causally explicable (at least in principle) in terms of, the sorts of properties dealt with at the "lower" level. The concept of emergent properties must feature, too, in any account of the causal nexus that has governed the universe since its origins in the Big Bang some 13.7 billion years ago. It was then that the process of nuclear fusion led first to the emergence, from hydrogen, of helium, then lithium, and so on right up to the heavier atoms such as iron that have been forged in supernovae. Each of the elements featuring in this causal story has its own emergent properties, properties not possessed by the simpler constituents of which they are the fused products. The concept of emergence must feature, again, in the account to be given of abiogenesis: the emergence of living organisms from nonliving inorganic compounds (molecules). Whether this occurred by means of autocatalysis or by some other mechanism remains to be determined. But clearly, the only alternative to explaining the origins, and hence the emergence, of living organisms is to invoke some sort of miraculous intervention by a supernatural agent. The same stark alternatives face us when we try to give an account of the emergence of various "mental" properties within the context of the evolutionary history of species. Whether or not we count possession of sensory powers such as the ability to "see," "hear," "touch," "smell," and "taste" as mental powers matters not. For possession of at least some of these seems to be a precursor of possession of the more stereotypically mental powers such as consciousness and the ability to think and reason. And each is arguably the causal product of the increasingly complex organization of the creature that possesses them. In short sensory powers, along with more stereotypical mental powers, can be seen as emerging in more complex biological organisms as they evolve from their (usually) simpler ancestors. The emergence of various mental properties—ranging from simple awareness to the ability to reason— seems to go hand in hand, for the most part, with the evolution of species from simpler ancestors. At no point do we need to invoke the miraculous intervention of a supernatural agent—some God or "intelligent designer"—to "explain" the emergence of such properties. There is a warranted presumption that naturalistic explanations (ultimately going back to the beginnings of the material universe) will suffice, no matter how elusive at this relatively early stage in our scientific knowledge. Viewed from this perspective, the idea of emergence is far more ubiquitous than is that of evolution. It encompasses the whole history of the universe since its earliest beginnings, from the origins of the elements, organic molecules, living organisms, sentient animals, to the powers of individual human beings and their powers when assembled in the complex organizations that form human societies. The relatively recent emergence—in the last

few million years—of various sophisticated mental properties in humans and their Neanderthal cousins, both with highly developed nervous systems, is nothing special. It forms only a small episode in the continuum of developments that began some 13.7 billion years ago. In 1998 the great biologist Edward O. Wilson latched on to the important idea of consilience as a concept needed in order to give us an overview of the unity of knowledge. By "consilience" he means "the 'jumping together' of knowledge by the linking of facts and fact-based theory across disciplines to create a common groundwork of explanation" (1998, p. 6).27 Consilience, so defined, has to do with the logical coherence or consistency of branches of knowledge. It is a logical-cum-epistemological concept. The concept of emergence, as I have defined it, is equally all-embracing. It affords us with an ontological concomitant of consilience. It forms part of a metaphysical theory—that of emergent materialism—in terms of which to think about the way reality is structured so as to make consilience achievable. It is a concept, I submit, that needs to feature, along with that of consilience, in any account of how the unity of science might be achieved. My general thesis may be expressed in quasi-biblical language as follows:

In the beginning was emergence. And episodes of emergence were part of the causal nexus that cemented the universe together. And science saw that it was good. For emergence formed part of the ontological underpinning that made the unity of knowledge possible.

5.6 The Metaphysics of Emergent Materialism

The concept of emergence is the distinguishing feature of the general metaphysical theory of emergent materialism. Some of the salient theses of emergent materialism, as I conceive it, are the following.

5.6.1 Substance Monism

Emergent materialism maintains that every object or substance that exists, whether relatively simple or complex, is a material one. Emergent materialism is thus a form of substance monism as opposed to substance dualism. It denies the existence of any objects or substances that are not material in nature, where the term "material" is best understood in terms of its extension, i.e., the set of properties designated by the term. These are properties such as mass, velocity, electrical charge, spin, spatial dimensions, and weight. In short, if minds or souls are conceived of as immaterial objects or substances, then the materialist says that there are no such things. The supposition that they do exist as objects arises from the temptation to reify abstract nouns like "mind" by treating them as names of real things capable of independent existence, or so I have argued. On the other hand, I have also argued that if the term "mind" is construed as an umbrella term for a set or collection of socalled mental properties (ranging from sensations to full-blown consciousness), then it is undoubtedly true that most people, if not in a vegetative state, do have minds.

5.6.2 The Doctrine of Property Dualism is Misconceived

Emergent materialism is sometimes classified as a form of so-called "property dualism," a metaphysical theory that, while espousing substance materialism, claims that the properties of material objects and substances are of two basic kinds: material and mental. But the idea of there

being only a duality of kinds of properties is conceptually myopic. Why not another duality dividing properties into living and nonliving? Or a combination of the two, yielding a trinitarian division of nonliving, living but nonmentalistic, and both living and mentalistic? Property dualism is a misleading conceptual framework within which to view the principal theses of emergent materialism. It is insufficiently synoptic.

5.6.3 Emergent Properties of Different Kinds

It does not follow from the assertion that all objects are material in nature that they do not also possess other kinds of properties. For material objects, when concatenated in complex objects, may produce properties in these complexes that are not possessed by their simpler material constituents. These are the properties that we have called emergent. In addition to having material properties, then, complex objects may come to have emergent properties that are not normally listed as material properties. In short, complex material objects may also come to have other properties as well, such as chemical, biochemical, biological, neurophysiological, mental, etc.

5.6.4 The "Hierarchy" of Sciences

In so classifying these other emergent properties of material objects we employ epistemic criteria. That is, we employ criteria drawn from the relevant field of scientific knowledge that deals with objects and substances having those different kinds of properties. Thus, physics is the field primarily devoted to the study of material properties of simple and complex objects; chemistry is the field primarily devoted to the study of the chemical properties of complex material objects, namely, molecules; biochemistry is the field primarily devoted to the study of biochemical properties of complex objects; and so on. In this way we get the concept of a "hierarchy" of the sciences with physics at the "lowest" level and the mental sciences much "higher" up, with the concepts employed at the lower level being employed in causal explanations of the phenomena involved at the higher levels. This way of categorizing both the properties of things and the sciences that study them reflects the disposition of the human mind and language to carve up reality into discontinuous segments when reality itself, the natural world, in its temporal development is continuous and relatively gradualistic. Our classificatory schemes are a function of linguistic legislation and social conventions the adequacy of which is continually being tested by our discoveries of how the world reveals itself in experience.

5.6.5 The Broad Spectrum of "Mental" Properties

In what follows just two examples—drawn from opposite ends of the spectrum of "mental" powers—will suffice to make the point. First, consider sensory powers. Having the power of seeing is standardly classified as a sensory property, and hence as a mental property. Yet at least one unicellular organism, euglena, possesses rudimentary "eye spots," clusters of pigments with photoreceptive properties that are thought to have evolved from molecularly similar chemoreceptors. If sensations are to be counted as mental properties, and light-sensitivity is to be counted as an elementary form of sensation, then it would seem that we are obliged to say that euglena possesses elementary mental powers. Where are we to draw the line, or lines, in the evolutionary spectrum? Or the line between corresponding fields of scientific study? The lines between molecular chemistry (studying chemoreceptors), molecular biology (studying

photoreceptors), and neurophysiology, for example, elude us. And nature itself doesn't determine them. The lines that we draw are partly up to us. Next, we can come at the point from the other direction, that of human consciousness, the principal preoccupation of those philosophers and neurophysiologists who contribute to the academic publication Journal of Consciousness Studies. Many contributors come at the concept of consciousness from the standpoint of subjectivity/phenomenology, of "what it is like" for humans to experience being conscious. Others are concerned with the neurophysiological bases of consciousness in both humans and other animals. Mammals are the sole possessors of a highly structured six-layered neocortex, the latest structure to evolve in some animal brains. The neocortex is thought to be involved in the higher functions of mammalian brains: sensory perception, conscious thought, and language, for example. But here our classificatory schemes come under pressure again. For cognitive processes also occur in avians, reptiles, and some amphibia, even though they lack brains having the distinctive six-layered neocortical structure of mammals. Are they to be counted as having elementary consciousness? Or do we need some new term to mark the difference between mammalian and nonmammalian consciousness? In my view, it matters little how we decide to describe these rudimentary cognitive processes so long as we recognize the various degrees of consciousness and other "mental powers" that are present, and have long been present, across the animal kingdom. We need not aspire to cleave nature at its conceptual joints. For it has none.

6. THE METAPHYSICAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF SURVIVAL

Those who adopt the metaphysical hypothesis of substance dualism get their thinking tied up in knots when we ask the simplest and most obvious questions about how their ideas are to be cashed out. Hence the vast list of "imponderable" questions raised in section 3. By way of contrast, the metaphysics of emergent materialism offers straightforward and scientifically well-grounded answers. Let us review them now.

6.1 Mind-Brain Dependence

The evident dependence of mental states on brain states generates problems for substance dualism only because of the ontological gulf dualists postulate between the mental and the material. But for emergent materialism there is no such gulf. Understand the umbrella term "mind" to span a broad spectrum of emergent "mental" properties, and the difficulty of conceiving of them as causal products of wholly material, but highly structured, complexes like the central nervous system is solved. Our mental abilities depend on the states of our central nervous system, just as the latter depend in turn on our biochemical makeup, our genes, and the environmental factors that influence our development. These causal transactions do not have to bridge a mythical gulf between two worlds. They occur within one world: the material one.

6.2 The Issue of Mental Causation

That changes in one state of affairs in the material world can be brought about by other changes in that world is apparent. Thus few—other than substance dualists—have difficulty conceiving of changes in our mental states being brought about by (i.e., caused by) changes in our neurological or pharmacological states. But equally, few—other than substance dualists— have difficulty conceiving of how the converse causal relations can occur, i.e., of how changes in our mental states

can bring about changes at "higher" levels such as one's social and political beliefs, changes in one's social behavior, and even changes at "lower" levels such as one's neurological states. Neither sort of causation requires God or any other supernatural agent to intervene. Both can and do occur within a wholly material world.

6.2.1 The Bogeyman of Epiphenomenalism

However, there are some materialists who do find it hard to swallow the idea of mental causation. Some feel impelled to embrace epiphenomenalism, the metaphysical theory that regards the "mind" as a mere byproduct of material processes, and hence as causally inefficacious. Their primary reason seems to be a reluctance to talk about mental events having causal powers unless they feature in the formulation of "strict" causal laws relating these mental events to the events they are ordinarily supposed to cause. But the requirement of strictness is a figment of myopic thinking. Such thinkers take the paradigm case of causal laws to be those expressible by the strict equations found in physics and chemistry, and ignore the sorts of natural laws operating in other natural sciences, such as evolutionary biology, where the essence of causation is found in the broader, looser, notions of "what brings such and such about" and "what happens when." The theory of evolution, for example, doesn't founder on its absence of many strict causal laws. It encompasses (involves the consilience of) a unified and well-attested set of laws and principles drawn not just from natural history, but from a host of other empirical sciences such as cosmology, astronomy, physics, biochemistry, geology, plate tectonics, paleontology, population genetics, ecology, ethology, anthropology, and comparative anatomy. Rarely in these sciences do we find mathematically expressible causal laws. For that matter, we have no difficulty believing that the excessive temperature (an emergent property) of an engine "caused" the constituent oil molecules in the engine's crankcase to break down (a case of downward causation), caused the engine to seize up, or that the seizing up of an engine "caused" much mental stress to its owners. Yet there are no "strict" causal laws relating all of the events in that series to one another. The requirement of strict causality, when so construed, is absurd. The presumption that for every change in a state of affairs (at least at the macrophysical level) there are other changes that bring them about withstands the demand for strict causal laws. So does the presumption that for every change in one state of affairs there are others that it in turn will bring about. There is no conceptual barrier, I am claiming, to acknowledging that changes in our mental properties can and do bring about other changes in the world around us. There is no good reason, that is, to suppose that mental events are at the tail ends of the causal chains that produce them. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the occurrence of a mental event may not produce changes at the so-called "lower" level. There may even be causal loops. A little personal anecdote suffices to make the point. Following my doctor's instructions, I recently doubled my dose of a certain medication in order to optimize my cholesterol readings. Ingestion of the pills caused changes in my biochemical state; they caused well-known though rare side effects including myalgia, the beginnings of rhabdomyolysis (breakdown of muscle tissue causing kidney failure), mental anxiety, lethargy, and mild depression; consciousness of those symptoms caused me to investigate their likely causes; my discoveries led me to make the conscious decision to stop taking the drug immediately; I did so, thus causing a change in my biochemistry; this brought about a cessation of my symptoms; and this—which happened only last week—made it possible for me to resume writing this paragraph in a more

positive frame of mind. The causal efficacy of changes in my mental properties is indisputable. Had I not decided as I did, I would have continued taking the drug, with life-threatening consequences. Philosophers still caught in the grip of a commitment to a "strict" conception of causation should try telling my story without reference to my changes of mind.

6.3 The Violation of Scientific Laws

Substance dualism conceives of minds as entities standing outside the causal nexus that operates in the material world, and hence as impotent to effect any nonmiraculous changes in that world. Emergent materialism, by contrast, conceives of all entities in the natural world as material objects or substances whose operations are described by the various "levels" of science: physics, chemistry, biochemistry, biology, and so on. By virtue of our having physical properties, there is no room for us to violate the laws of conservation, and the causal closure of the physical can therefore be maintained. By virtue of our having chemical properties, we are subject to the laws of chemistry. By virtue of our having biochemical properties, we are subject to the laws of biochemistry. And so on. Most of these properties are emergent, and changes in their possession are causally efficacious. No violations of scientific laws are called for.

6.4 Minds as Miracle-Workers

Substance dualism requires that minds, if they have effects in the natural world, should intervene in its operations in the manner of god-like miracleworkers. But that puts human minds in competition with these supernatural agents. According to substance dualists, we perform miracles all of the time. According to science, and the metaphysics of emergent materialism, we don't.

6.5 Our Embryological and Developmental Histories

Accept the false presuppositions of substance dualism and you'll feel impelled to answer hosts of imponderable questions about just when the mind or soul is implanted in the developing human being. Is it already built into the sperm and ovum from which you were spawned, as some theologians used to think? Or does implantation occur at conception, as religious conservatives believe? Or at a later stage in the development of the embryo, as some more liberal religionists believe? The questions proliferate. To take any of them seriously is to get yourself lost in Hume's "fairyland" of nonscience. These questions, I've argued, are spurious, or—as Locke would put it—"altogether improper." They make no sense to ask, or try to answer, once we reject the whole concept of mind or soul as an entity akin to a bodily organ, only a nonsolid ghostly one. That is where science comes in. The sciences of embryology and our developmental history do not allow for anything like ensoulment to occur— some particular time when a nonsentient embryo, or its fetal successor, comes to have an additional object called a mind or soul. Rather, these sciences allow us to trace out the gradual growth of an increasingly complex set of organs, including the brain and central nervous system, with commensurately sophisticated mental properties emerging as the "hardware" develops.

6.6 Our Evolutionary Histories

The story of evolution—pertaining not just to Homo sapiens but to other sentient species as well—has an even more salutary lesson to teach. It takes away the lure of anthropocentrism. Despite the

late Pope's views on the matter, the science of evolution reminds us that we are not alone in the animal world in having minds, i.e., in having sensory awareness, intelligence, emotions, creativity, and consciousness. Individual humans can possess some of these emergent properties and not others, or possess them to greater or lesser degrees. And so can other animals, including our closest contemporary relatives: chimpanzees, bonobos, and other great apes. What happens to their mental properties when they die? The answer is unequivocal. Their properties die too. No supernatural afterworld awaits their disembodied minds or souls any more than it awaits the disembodied grin of the Cheshire Cat. As for them, so for us.

7. CONCLUSION

We are part of the natural universe. Both as individuals and as a species, we have evolved, will live, die, and eventually become extinct, within it.

Is There Life After Death?: A Review of the Supporting Evidence by David Lester

IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH?

The two major sources of evidence for contemporary research bearing on life after death are reports of near-death experiences and ostensible reincarnation. This section summarizes the conclusions that I drew in my earlier review (Lester, 2005).

Near-Death Experiences

Bruce Greyson (1998) points out that there is no adequate definition of an NDE, and consequently it is difficult to compare the near-death research of different investigators. It is not even possible to calculate the incidence of NDEs. For example, many investigators use the term "near-death experience" to mean the experience described by Raymond Moody in his 1975 book Life After Life. But this definition is quite restrictive in that it would eliminate all other types of experience. The Moody-type NDE can be rated for its depth—that is, how many of the fifteen or so elements are present— but then that raises the issue of how many elements must be present for the experience to qualify as a Moody-type NDE. If it has all fifteen, that's fine, but what about five elements, or just one? Is that sufficient? Other investigators use the term "near-death experience" to mean any experience that occurs in life-threatening situations. This opens the field up immensely and, for example, permits the inclusion of the occasional unpleasant and hellish experiences. Moreover, use of the term "near death" raises the issue of whether individuals reporting NDEs must truly be near death, and if so, how close to death they must be.

Greyson (1998) raises a number of other methodological issues:

1. While good research requires large sample sizes, the sample sizes in near-death research are often small. In some studies the sample size is not even known! Michael Sabom and Sarah Kreutziger (1977) reported that they interviewed "roughly" fifty patients. Researchers are expected to know and report how many subjects they used.

2. The samples are not random, but rather consist of volunteers and people who are referred to the investigator. Good research requires random samples and, even if random samples are not possible, complete subject pools (such as everyone in a large college class or at a union meeting). The use of volunteers biases the results (Lester, 1969), and it is not known in which way the results will be biased. This means that the samples used are not uniform or easily duplicated. For example, Greyson and Stevenson (1980) obtained their sample of reports from letters to a national magazine (which they did not identify), responses to announcements of requests for participants in "professional newsletters" (which they did not identify), and communications to one of the authors. Samples should be uniform—that is, derived from one type of source—and described in enough detail that another researcher could obtain a similar sample.

3. Since much near-death research is done by those who believe that NDEs provide evidence for life after death, the questions posed to respondents are often leading and biased. Melvin Morse and Paul Perry (1994) argue that Kenneth Ring's research is flawed in this way.

4. Much of the research on NDEs concerns experiences that occurred many years before they are recounted to investigators. Memory is not good for such events. It is crucial that research on NDEs use experiences that are only hours, or at most days, old. As a result of these research inadequacies Greyson (1998) was unable to provide a valid estimate of even the incidence of NDEs in the general population. The estimates in the various studies he reviewed ranged from 0 percent to 100 percent!

5. Many experiences are said to be similar to NDEs and, therefore, are postulated as "explanations" of them. There has never been methodologically sound research comparing these experiences.

Does Anyone Do Good Research?

Interestingly, the answer to the question in the heading is "Yes." The good research is limited, and it is carried out by those not necessarily focused on NDEs, such as emergency room doctors and nurses. For example, Betsy A. Finkelmeier, Nancy J. Kenwood, and Catherine Summers (1984) surveyed sixty patients who had "cardiac death" and found that 20 percent were aware of medical procedures, 5 percent experienced separation from their body, and 4 percent experienced a tunnel with a bright light at the end. Compared to patients with disturbances in their heart rhythm, these cardiac death patients felt more anxiety and feelings of dependency and made greater lifestyle changes after their hospitalizations. Other sound studies have been reported by Paula Tosch (1988) and Madelaine Lawrence (1995). Pim van Lommel, Ruud van Wees, Vincent Meyers, and Ingrid Elfferich (2001) also conducted a sound NDE study. They interviewed all survivors of cardiac arrest in several hospitals in the Netherlands within a few days of the resuscitation. Of the 344 patients, 18 percent reported an NDE. Using Ring's scale, 6 percent had a superficial experience, 5 percent a moderate experience, 5 percent a deep experience, and 2 percent a very deep experience. The most common components were positive emotions (in 56 percent of those reporting an NDE), an awareness of being dead (50 percent), and moving through a tunnel (31 percent). The least common components were the presence of a border (8 percent) and a life review (13 percent).

Van Lommel compared the patients who reported an NDE of any depth with those who did not and found that an NDE was more common in those under the age of 60, if it was the first heart attack, if they died in the next 90 days, if they had had NDEs before, and if they did not have a generalized memory defect after the resuscitation. Extra medication, duration of unconsciousness, duration of cardiac arrest, intubation, and electrophysiological stimulation were not related to the frequency of having an NDE. Depth of NDE was greater in women, those who had had CPR outside of the hospital, and those who died in the next thirty days. In two-year and eight-year followup interviews, those patients who had had an NDE reported a more positive impact from the near-death incident, such as becoming more loving and empathic, having less fear of death, and having a greater sense of inner meaning to life.

Unresolved Questions

Kastenbaum (1996) notes several questions that need to be addressed:

1. Why do the majority of those who have close calls with death fail to report NDEs?

2. Why are some NDEs nightmarish while others are comforting?

3. Why are some NDEs experienced in non-life-threatening situations?

Kastenbaum suggested several crucial areas of research. For example, more reports are needed from those who have had NDEs during close calls with death to compare with the reports of those who have had NDEs in non-lifethreatening situations. He also urged that reports be taken under controlled conditions, with an emphasis on eliminating the bias contributed by eager researchers who believe that NDEs "prove" that survival occurs. Kastenbaum also urged that some measure of closeness to death (and type of closeness) be attached to each NDE report: Did the heart stop, and if so, for how long? Was the person in a coma? If so, what was the depth of coma? How long did the coma last? And so on. Kastenbaum urged that researchers impose rigorous research standards.

Do NDEs Show that There is Life After Death?

Kastenbaum (1996) discusses the relevance of NDEs as evidence for survival. Kastenbaum is convinced that NDEs are not fabrications by the people reporting them, but looks at them as reports rather than as experiences. As he did not "experience" what NDErs told him, he could only conduct research on their reports. The distinction is particularly relevant for reports where the NDEr recalls an NDE from many years ago. In such cases not even the NDEr is "experiencing" the event. They are recalling an experience and reporting what they recall. The "I" that gives the report is not the same "I" who had the NDE many years earlier.

Kastenbaum is not convinced that NDEs are evidence for survival after death. He suggests that NDEs are mental states that occur when people can do nothing directly to improve their chances of surviving a crisis. The state serves to quiet the nervous system and conserve energy. Kastenbaum also points out that "People who have died and stayed dead have not necessarily had the experiences reported by those who have shared their extraordinary episodes with us" (1996, p. 261).

It should be noted that NDE critics have produced little if any research to support their alternative explanations. Therefore, at present their explanations must be placed "on hold." However, there are several troubling findings of near-death research if NDEs are taken as evidence for life after death:

1. There appears to be a huge impact of culture on the NDE. Despite the opinions of those publishing NDE accounts from different cultures that they are similar, the differences are striking. If NDEs are evidence for life after death, they should be the same in every culture.

2. The near-death incident's effect on the NDE is disturbing. Tunnel experiences may be more common in those who have cardiopulmonary arrest (Drab, 1981). Stuart Twemlow and Glen O. Gabbard (1984–1985) found evidence that fever during the near-death incident, heart stoppages, accidents, general anesthesia, drugs and medications, and severe pain affect the nature of the NDE reported. These studies were not completely methodologically sound, but future research must study or eliminate the impact of these kinds of variables to make a convincing case one way or the other.

3. Ring's (1992) research comparing NDErs and unidentified flying object experiencers (UFOErs) raises concerns. Ring showed that both groups have similar childhood experiences, personality traits, and even psychiatric symptoms. Since UFO encounters do not provide evidence for life after death, perhaps NDEs do not do so either, as both may be products of eccentric or disturbed minds. On the other hand, if reports of NDEs in very young children and in those blind from birth could be obtained immediately after the near-death incident and were found to be similar to those of adults, this would count in favor of understanding NDEs as evidence for life after death. But good research on these two groups has not yet appeared. Thus, at the present time the evidence that NDEs point toward life after death is unconvincing.

Reincarnation

Does reincarnation research support the reality of life after death? Here I will summarize the conclusions that I drew in my earlier review (Lester, 2005).

Problems with the Cases

Problems with reincarnation accounts are illustrated by a case reported by Satwant K. Pasricha and David R. Barker (1981). They described the case of a five-year-old boy in 1974 in India who recognized a man (a bus driver) from another town about 160 miles away, a town that the boy and his family had never visited. Eventually, the boy gave enough information to identify his "previous incarnation" as a man named Bithal Das, born in 1922, who died in 1955 by accidental electrocution. The boy's father took him to the town that Das had lived in, where the boy made several correct identifications. For example, the boy reported having been a carpenter, told of his death from electrocution, and described the house that he had lived in with some correct details. Barker and Pasricha investigated the case from 1976–1979, visiting the region and talking to the participants. Barker and Pasricha evaluated the case separately and came to different conclusions. Barker regretted that there was no written record of the boy's initial statements, leaving details of the case dependent on the memory of the informants. Barker also noted that members of both

families (the boy's family and the Das family) had a deep emotional investment in viewing the boy as the reincarnation of Bithal Das. This throws doubt on the accuracy of their memory of what transpired for, as has been well demonstrated by psychological research, memory is often faulty and is best viewed as a reconstruction in the present of what happened in the past, shaped by emotions and desires.

Barker also noted that the case was full of discrepancies and contradictions. The witnesses could not agree on whether the boy had mentioned the name Bithal Das before he went to the town, or only after people in the town had recalled a carpenter who had died from electrocution. The boy described the house incorrectly, placed it in the wrong part of town, and couldn't locate it himself in the town. He named Bithal's wife incorrectly at first, and may have misstated the number and sex of his children. Barker found that the accuracy of the boy's account of his previous incarnation improved dramatically over time, concluding that he came to identify with the person Bithal Das, particularly because the people around him supported him in and rewarded him for this identification. Barker noted, howevIser, that the initial recognition of the driver, along with the fact that the boy gave the driver sufficient information to suggest who the previous incarnation might have been, cannot be explained by this interpretation, and suggested that paranormal ESP might account for those details. By contrast, Pasricha felt that the boy had been quite accurate in his account of his previous incarnation, but she could not accept reincarnation as an explanation for the case. She suggested instead that the boy had extremely well-developed ESP, and that this had provided him with the accurate information. The case illustrates what is needed to provide more convincing evidence that reincarnation has occurred:

1. Investigators must be present from the start. A case is required in which, when a child begins to recall a "previous existence," his words are recorded right from the beginning.

2. The record should involve videos of the child, or at least auditory recordings, permitting verbatim transcripts and observations of whether coaching or prompting of the child took place.

3. Preferably, the investigators must be present continuously from this point on so that they can monitor what the child is told by his or her parents, relatives, friends of the family, and acquaintances.

4. The desires of parents and others that the reincarnation is valid interfere with the case. The phenomenon of experimenter bias involves the experimenter biasing the results of his or her experiment. The results that the experimenter desires can influence how he reacts to the subject, how he communicates with the subject, and the inadvertent errors he makes in recording and analyzing the information. Parents, relatives, friends, and the investigators can influence the results to be in line with their "hypothesis" and their desires. Thus, the investigators should include believers and skeptics, and they should take care to minimize the influence of the parents and relatives of the child.

5. Cases for reporting should not be selected, but rather all cases should be recorded, examined, and reported for others to examine.

6. The child should not be allowed to visit the place of the previous incarnation or meet people who knew the previous incarnation prior to the arrival of the investigators.

Alternative Explanations

Before deciding whether reincarnation reports provide evidence for life after death, alternative explanations for the phenomenon must be considered, explanations other than fraud by the parents of the child or by the investigators. Explanations of reincarnation experiences include:

(1) persons have obtained the relevant information through normal means but have forgotten that the information was acquired in this way (cryptomnesia); (2) reports of the reincarnation experience are modified (consciously or subconsciously) by the subjects and their friends and relatives to be more true to the "facts," and facts that are later discovered are mistakenly attributed to the subjects (paramnesia); (3) subjects acquire information about a deceased person's life paranormally (by ESP) and then personify this information into a secondary personality; (4) in cases where the subject is related to the previous personality, there is the possibility of inherited memory (Irwin, 1999); and (5) the subjects of reincarnation experiences may have been possessed by the spirit of the deceased person.

Regarding explanation (3), even if it is possible that a person acquires information about a deceased person's life by ESP, there is no reason why the life recalled by the experient should be of someone who is dead. Indeed, ESP combined with personification would presumably be easier if the other person was still alive. Thus, if (3) is true, children should report other lives later found to be true of people still living at the time. Some of these alternative explanations—such as ESP plus personification, inherited memory, and possession—are harder to believe than reincarnation itself. Indeed, if these were our only alternatives, reincarnation would seem like the more reasonable hypothesis, as there is no evidence to support these alternative explanations whatsoever. However, ruling out cryptomnesia and paramnesia is very difficult, especially if investigators are called to the scene only after a child reports a previous existence.

Logical Problems with Reincarnation

Explaining such cases in terms of reincarnation raises several questions:

1. Investigators are unclear about what is purportedly reincarnated. Stevenson (1974) noted that what reincarnates might include memories (which can provide facts to be checked), emotions (such as fears and phobias), behaviors (such as skills and preferences), and physical features (such as birthmarks) shown by the previous personality. But then why do some cases have only some of these features and not all of them?

2. Stevenson conceded that it is problematic that reincarnation cases are reported more often in societies that believe in reincarnation than in those that do not. If reincarnation really occurs, why does the frequency of reports vary from society to society?

3. Stevenson noted that in his best cases the previous person lived in the same region as the current person. But there should be more cases where the previous personality is from a different nation, for there is no reason why deceased spirits should be constrained by space. So far no case involving

a previous personality from a different country has produced sufficient information to trace to an actual once-living person. Why do reincarnation reports typically involve deceased people from the same region?

4. Stevenson noted that ostensible reincarnation cases rarely include reports of events that occurred between lives. A child in India may recall meeting with Krishna or Lakshmi, or a Tlingit may recall crossing a lake in a canoe and returning across the same lake to be reborn, but such reports are rare. Why are events from the period between lives typically not remembered?

5. Why doesn't everyone remember a previous life? Stevenson felt that it was more pertinent to ask why anyone remembers a previous life. Remembering a previous life does not make a person happier. In Stevenson's cases the previous personality often died violently, died young, and their personalities are often those of greedy, wealthy men and devout, generous women. But this is not a convincing answer. Stevenson and other reincarnation proponents must explain why everyone does not remember a previous incarnation.

6. Since there is no reason to believe that people are reincarnated only once, why do Stevenson's subjects remember only one previous incarnation rather than many?

7. Why are the well-documented cases found only in a limited number of countries?

8. Why do memories of the previous life typically fade away as a person grows older?

9. Why are "memories" often preserved in ostensible cases of reincarnation, while desires and purposes are ostensibly carried over less often?

10. Stevenson (1988) mentions cases in which previous personalities appear in a child before the previous "incarnation" dies. For example, in a case in Thailand the child was born one day before the death of the previous incarnation. Such cases cast doubt on a reincarnationist interpretation of these reports. All things considered, researchers who propose reincarnation as an explanation for the cases that they report have a great deal of theoretical analysis to do in order to make their explanation convincing.

Do Reincarnation Reports Provide Evidence for Life After Death?

A review of existing reincarnation research does not provide convincing evidence for life after death. There are large cultural variations in the reports, and there is no reason why the characteristics of Stevenson's cases should vary significantly from culture to culture. Such cultural variation suggests that the belief system of the culture determines the content of the reports. If a culture believes that sex change does not occur from one life to another, then it is not found in the reports; and if a culture believes that sex change is possible, then it is found. If reincarnation really occurs, there should be no cultural variation at all.

Second, in the only cases examined by experts in the area, those involving xenoglossy (the ability to speak in a language purportedly never learned by normal means), the expert (Thomason, 1984) indicated clearly that the investigator (Stevenson, 1976) made errors in his investigation of cases and that his evidence was not convincing. The expert suggested how such cases should be approached, but no one has yet reported doing a proper investigation. Third, the absence of

memories of existence between incarnations is puzzling. Spirits should remember these times as well as those from the previous incarnation. This is particularly important because on survivalist interpretations of NDEs, NDEs concern life in the spirit world. Reincarnation experiences indicate nothing about a spirit world. The two sources of evidence are apparently in conflict.

Finally, it is puzzling that no adequate case has yet been reported. Many of the investigators are in India, a country where reports of reincarnation experiences appear to be very common, yet no investigator has had a child of their own, or grandchild, or child with whom they are closely acquainted, report a previous life where video recordings could be made from the beginning for inspection by others. The likelihood is that people who report experiences of previous lives are shaped in this behavior by the beliefs of their culture, their own needs, and the desires of their parents and significant others. Children in India report previous incarnations in nearby towns of recently deceased, ordinary people, just as their parents expect; children in Native American families in the Northwest report previous incarnations from the same family line, just as their parents expect. The reports conform too closely to cultural expectations. In summary, then, reincarnation research fails to be convincing that there is a life after death.

LESTER'S REQUIREMENTS FOR GOOD RESEARCH ON NDES

In Lester (2003) I noted that any theory that proposes that NDEs are similar to another kind of experience must: (1) collect fifty or more consecutive examples of the two experiences from clearly defined samples; (2) devise a coding manual for the two kinds of experiences; and (3) have the reports of the experiences coded for content by judges blind to the source of each report. For example, this methodology must be used to support the proposal that NDEs are simply depersonalization experiences, or that they are the same as ketamine-induced experiences. The same methodology must be used for arguments that cross-cultural samples of NDEs are the same (or that they differ).

Those who argue that NDEs are affected by variables such as fever, coma, or depth of unconsciousness must similarly collect a large sample of NDEs from a clearly defined sample (such as every heart attack patient in a hospital over a ten-year period), with the possible confounding variables measured, and then the reports must be judged according to a coding manual by judges ignorant about the variables being studied. Has this been done? I conducted a literature search for the years 2004–2010 using the PsycINFO database to find out. The results are summarized below.

Cross-Cultural Cases

James McClenon (2006) reported eight NDEs from the Kongo in Central Africa and asserted that the cases resembled Western NDEs. He obtained no comparison cases, made no coding manual, and had no "blind" raters. Here is the report of one Kongo NDEr:

[W]hen I died, I found myself at the bank of the Zaire River. Across the river several people appeared and said, "you must not die; there are too many orphans to care for." They told me about three plants, which cure women suffering from barrenness. (Janzen, 1978, p. 196)

This has virtually no similarity to the classic Western NDE! Pasricha (2008) reported on an indeterminate number of NDEs from India (indeterminate because it is impossible to identify why the number changes for each element). She concluded that these cases confirm the existence of common features across culture. Of her cases, 74 percent of NDErs were passed to a man with a book, and 89 percent were sent back because of a mistake. These two elements are hardly ever reported by Western NDErs. A life review was reported by 0 percent (but based on only 13 cases).3 Although Pasricha's study did not conform to my requirements for a sound NDE study, on the face of it her Indian NDEs appear to differ considerably from Western NDEs, despite Pasricha's conclusion that they are similar.

Allan Kellehear (2008) reviewed other researchers' reports of NDEs in different cultures (using reports from small samples and some undocumented reports) and concluded that two features seemed to be universal (the appearance of beings and another world), while three were not (a tunnel, an out-ofbody experience or OBE, and a life review). This study would have been methodologically sound only if Kellehear had collected the original full sample of reports from each previous investigator and used "blind" raters to rate them.

Before and After "Moody"

Geena Athappilly, Greyson, and Stevenson (2006) compared NDE reports published before and after the publication of Moody's pioneering book in 1975. Of Moody's fourteen elements, only one was more commonly reported after his 1975 book, the report of a tunnel, which increased from 16 percent in earlier reports to 64 percent in the later ones. Thus, Moody's book does not seem to have had much of an impact on NDE reports, but the tunnel element appears to be a possible result of shaping by published articles and books. It should also be noted that Jeffrey P. Long and Jody A. Long (2003), using an Internet-based survey, did not find any differences in the content of pre- and post-Moody NDEs, but none of the reports that they compared were published before the publication of Moody's book.

Disconfirming Evidence

Greyson, Janice Miner Holden, and J. Paul Mounsey (2006) reported medically

induced cardiac arrest in patients having implanted cardioverters/defibrillators and found no case of an NDE or the ability to perceive images in the operating room visible only above eye-level. This is a methodologically sound study, but limited to only fifty people, none of whom, unfortunately, reported an NDE. Hopefully the study can be continued so that the sample size can be increased. NDErs Willoughby B. Britton and Richard R. Bootzin (2004) compared people reporting an NDE against controls for their performance in a sleep study. The NDErs had more evidence of epileptiform seizures in the left temporal hemisphere, a shorter duration of sleep, and delayed REM (rapid eye movement) sleep compared to the controls. Britton and Bootzin concluded that NDErs may have abnormal temporal lobe functioning. Craig Murray and Jezz Fox (2006) compared people reporting an NDE with those reporting a spontaneous OBE. The OBErs scored higher on scales to measure somatoform dissociation, dissatisfaction with their bodies, and heightened self-awareness and self-consciousness. It would have been useful for present purposes to have had a control group whose members had had neither experience. Kevin R. Nelson, Michelle

Mattingly, Sherman A. Lee, and Frederick A. Schmitt (2006) found that, compared to control group members, NDErs more often had seen things, objects, or people that others could not see just before falling asleep or just after waking up, and could hear sounds, music, or voices that others could not hear during this state. The researchers interpreted this as evidence for REM intrusion and the involvement of the physiological arousal system in NDEs.4 Since subjects were not studied in a sleep laboratory, the use of the term REM intrusion is misleading; neither REM nor "the physiological arousal system" was studied. The differences between the two groups seem to point to a greater susceptibility to hallucinations among NDErs, which does not support the proposition that NDEs are evidence for life after death. Overall, these studies suggest that malfunctioning physiological and pathological personality variables may cause NDEs and that, therefore, NDEs do not provide evidence for life after death.

Alternative Explanations

Lester (2005) pointed out that those proposing alternative explanations for NDEs not only report badly designed research, but often do no research at all. For example, Einar Stefansson, Sindri Traustason, and Thor Eysteinsson (2006) proposed an ocular physiological explanation for visual components of the NDE, while Gerald M. Woerlee (2004) focused on the physiological changes (such as oxygen deprivation) that occur during a heart attack. Neither report contains any experimental data, only speculation.

Objections to Karma and Rebirth An Introduction by Ingrid Hansen Smythe

Let us begin this investigation of the twin concepts of karma and rebirth by imagining the following scene, in which a man named Lenny is visiting his friend Pedro in the hospital after discovering hat Pedro has recently been run over by abus. "Wow, that look sin credibly painful," says Lenny, setting a basket of fruit on the bedside table. "You've got sixteen broken bones, damage to your internal organs, and look at those battery acid burns all over your face. That must hurt like the dickens." "I never knew this kin dof agony was possible,"groans Pedro. "Oh yes, and worse besides," says Lenny, pausing for a moment's reflection. "Of cour se you deserve it, after what you did." "What?" Pedro replies. "What did I do to deserve this?" "I don't know, but look at the state of you! You're a complete mess! You must have done something really awful, you scoundrel. Or maybe you had some really depraved thoughts, or you said some wicked and sinful words. Or maybe you did a whole bunch of bad little deeds over countless lives and the consequences have accumulated and now—bingo— it's payback time." "What in blazes are you talking about?" "I'm talking about karma, my friend, and the fact that what goes around comes around. Karma is here to teach you to straighten up and fly right, understand?" "I understand that I'd do anything to avoid this happening again." "I'm sure you would. Too bad that you can never know why this happened, but that's karma for you. All that you know is that you've done some really terrible things and you should be ashamed of yourself. But karmic justice doesn't come with a moral instruction manual—you know, do this, don't do that—so, really, it's impossible to avoid this sort of misery happening again and again, over infinite lifetimes. Want a grape?" "No I don't want a grape! What kind of a friend are you anyway?" "The straight-talking kind. Hey, don't blame me for the fact that karma

is a moral law. Besides, you're the lucky one. All of this suffering means that you're working off the bad karma that's stuck to you like plaque to a tooth. In fact, I'd be doing you a favor if I slapped this cast on your leg right now and made you suffer even more." "No! Help! Nurse!" "Hey, buddy, I'm just telling it like I isor, rather, like I've been told it is by people who don't know any more about it than I do. That's the way belief works, my friend. "Slap. "Aaaaarrrrghhhh!" And so on. Notice that, in addition to astonishing insensitivity, there seems to be something very strange going on in the above dialogue. Clearly the straight-talking hospital visitor is blaming his friend for his terrible misfortune, suggesting that Pedro now lies prostrate on a hospital bed, suffering intolerable physical pain, as a direct consequence of past immoral thoughts, words, or deeds. These offenses may have occurred in this life, or in a past one; there is no way of knowing, nor any way of knowing exactly what offenses committed by the victim have brought this tragedy about. Lenny also believes that getting run over by abusis ultimately a good thing, as it is through suffering that lucky Pedro will rid himself of his bad karma; and it is this belief that prompts Lenny to slap Pedro's broken leg, since it is logic alto assume that increasing suffering will increase karmic exfoliation. The word "karma" will be familiar to many since it is often used casually in popular parlance, but an exact definition may be somewhat more elusive. "Karma" is derived from the Sanskrit verb that means "to act, do, bring about," and it suggests that "one makes something by doing something; one creates by acting"(Long,1987,p.262). Thus karma denotes the impersonal and transethical system under which one's current situation in the world is regarded as the fruit of seeds planted by one's behaviour and dispositions of the past, and the view that [in] all of one's present actions lie similar seeds that will have continuing and determinative effect on one's life as they bear fruit in the future.(Long,1987,p.262)

Note that "action" doesn't refer only to physical acts but, rather, "one performs an action by body, speech, or mind" (Anguttara Nikaya 6:63). Simply put, karma is a system of causality in which morally positive thoughts, words, and deeds lead to happy circumstances in this life and in future lives, whereas morally negative thoughts, words, and deeds result in pain and suffering in its various forms. This explains why Lenny can be confident that Pedro thought, did, or said something morally repugnant some time in his past, and thus that Pedro, and Pedro alone, is responsible for his own into lerable suffering:

Whatever one deserves . . . he deserves in virtue of his actions and he gets all that he deserves and only that which he deserves. Nothing which accrues to a doer on account of his actions is ever lost and nothing accrues to him on account of any thing other than his actions. Itis, therefore, that the law is called the law of conservation of moral values.(Prasad,1989,p.215)

This is the central idea of karma—that what the individual has done in the past conditions his present circumstances, and similarly, what the individual does in the present conditions his future. Lenny can also rest assured that Pedro deserves to suffer because of the strictly impartial justice that is intrinsic to the system; Pedro is simply reaping what he has sown, and hopefully the experience of getting hit by a bus will make Pedro a better man and teach him to take holiness and moral perfection just a little more seriously in future. Karma is understood to be a moral law that, like gravity or any other physical law, is built into the very structure of the universe. It has extraordinary explanatory powers, it is said, because it can account for the fact that life appears,

on the face of it, to be so terribly unfair. Why should it be Pedro who gets hit by a bus, while Lenny spends his life navigating public transit without incident? Why are some people so healthy, lucky, beautiful, rich, and so on, while others are not? Why are some people born to live like royalty, spending a lifetime being happy and overfed, while others are born to live like torture victims, destined to spend their sad little lives cover edinflie sand scabs? The explanation is mercifully simple. It's the law of karma inaction, a law that automatically ensures that all of us eventually get exactly what we deserve. This means that there is no innocent suffering under the law of karma, and we can take comfort in the fact that even the baby born to live in filth and squalor and then die in misery is actually guilty of some heinous moral offense and is there for edeserving of its fate. The essential supernatural process that works hand in hand with karma is rebirth, which means that the soul or the self is reborn "in a series of physical or preternatural embodiments, which are customarily human or animal in nature but are in some instances divine, angelic, demonic, vegetative, or astrological" (Long, 1987, p. 269). Essentially, the rebirth proponent imagines that life is like a roller coaster, and at the end of the ride you don't have to get off but simply change cars, at which point you get to go around all over again. By contrast, the unbeliever thinks that although life may be like a rollercoaster, you only get to go around once, and the ride will always—without exception—be cut short due to mechanical failure. A wheel will fly off, the power will be cut, the track will unexpectedly end mid-loop—there are many critical physical systems that can break down, and one of them always does, and the ride ends both catastrophically and permanently. Karma and rebirth work in tandem, each providing justification for the other. Postulating rebirth is essential because, obviously, karma doesn't deliver its promised rewards and punishments in just one lifetime. Likewise, the running tally of morally good versus bad actions that karmic accounting provides gives the soul a direction to proceed in the next life. Without karma, souls might reincarnate willy-nilly, and the afterlife would be a total shambles. The law of karma ensures that bad people are punished while good people move up the chain of existence, eventually stepping off the crazy roller coaster of karma and rebirth entirely and achieving the ultimate post embodied state of bliss unbounded. There are many extraordinary things about the law of karma, including its alleged ability to tell us why bad things happen to seemingly good people. But the most extraordinary thing about karma, by far, is its evidential status.

1.EVIDENCE

There isn't any. As astonishing as it may be, there is not even one single datum of evidence for the existence of karma. Nor can there be, for karma's effects are not necessarily immediate: the consequences of immoral acts are uncoupled from the acts themselves, possibly taking lifetimes to manifest. The karma hypothesis, therefore, is fundamentally unfalsifiable. This fact is dumbfounding considering the formidable grip that karma has had over the minds of believers for millennia, and also considering that karma is not a trivial dogma—for adherents, the consequences of acting on their belief can be radically life-altering. This situation is not atypical in matters of religious belief, where "faith" is commonly used to mean "the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 1:11, King James Version). But its ubiquity doesn't mean that we shouldn't shine a very bright light on the naked truth of karma's humble status as mere dogma. Even in religious studies textbooks there are only tepidreminders that karma is a doctrine that must be take non faith, as if taking things on faith is not a bizarre and extraordinary thing to do. Normally,weare no timpressed

by claims with no evidence to back the mup, and we demand a higher standard of proof—something, at least—anything—but the karma proponent has no evidence at all to propupadubious doctrine. In fact, the situation is worse than this, because not only is there no experiential evidence for karma, but the circumstantial evidence points in the opposite direction. It's heartbreakingly obvious that life isn't fair. Whether you woke up today in o pulence and splendor, or in a cardboard box under a bridge, this much is certain; and yet it is this obvious fact of life, so visible in the natural world, that the karma proponent vociferously denies. (The believer in karma may desperately want life to be fair, but to say that it is there for efairis surely to confuse is with ought.) Because there can be no evidence for karma, it must fall into the category of a revealed belief, i.e., a disclosure of special knowledge by some higher power. While the believer regards "revelation" as a legitimate pronouncement originating from some higher power, the skeptic sees it as a word used by believers to make respectable what we normally think of as imagination run amuck. Couching religious concepts in logical-sounding language is the oldest trick in the book to give an air of legitimacy to suspect ideas, making them sound plausible and even rational without exciting too much curiosity. The word "revelation" lends weight and authority to ideas that, were they not revealed by a higher power, might otherwise be seen as pure fantasy. But how can the believer ever be confident that a particular revelation originates from the divine? "How do you know that it's true?" is a question that the karma proponent must inevitably confront, and what the believer has to admit is this: "I believe in karma because someone with exactly as much evidence as I have—i.e., absolutely none—told me that it was true." This is an astonishingly childlike response, and considering that the fate of one's soul supposedly hangs in the balance, it's an altogether in adequate one. The epistemological status of rebirth is no better: like karma, it is dogma, i.e., unprovable assertion or opinion.4 Even if someone claims to have evidence of previous incarnations from "remembering" (as opposed to imagining) a past life and provides extraordinary knowledge to support this, this doesn't show that: (a) souls exist; (b) they can exist apart from our physical bodies; (c) they survive death; or (d) they can migrate into another body. These are fantastic claims, and if they don't sound fantastic, that's undoubtedly because we're so used to hearing them. Applying Ockham's razor, we can safely say that it's far more likely that someone with extraordinary knowledge of the past acquired it from a book, a television (TV) show, a radio program, a website, or from someone that they know (perhaps even someone with an agenda who has primed the past-life claimant with the relevant information).One needn't postulate a past life, with all of its extravagant claims, to explain knowledge of past events and people. However, just because there is not (and there cannot be) any empirical evidence for karma and rebirth, we cannot conclude that they are untrue. Like God or Bertrand Russell's celestial teapot (which his said to orbit the Sun between Earth and Mars but is too small to be detected by telescopes)(Dawkins,2006,p.52),in the final analysis karma and rebirth can never be proven or disproven. Given the huge number of difficulties confronting them (more of which we'll examine below), we might reasonably conclude that karma and rebirth are wildly improbable; however, let us assume from this point forward that karma and rebirth have a probability greater than zero. What logic a land moral problems be set the karma and rebirth hypotheses?

2.EVALUATION

Let us imagine another scenario in which Lenny (after leaving a petrified Pedro in the hospital) sees a toothless sold beggar sitting on a park bench and, in a fit of generosity, decides to do a kindness for him (and may be get a little bit of that good karma for himself in the process). Sensibly, Lenny doesn't give him money because the old beggar already smells like a grow-op, and Lenny thinks it unwise, and unkind, to support what looks like a pernicious drug habit. Thus Lenny ventures in to a fast food restaurant and, being careful to be extra nice to the employee behind the counter, buys the man a chicken sandwich, a garden salad, and a carton of milk. Lenny tries very hard not to feel proud of this good deed as he hands the bum his riches, after which he wanders off to a bench some distance away in order to surreptitiously watch the man enjoy his meal. The question is this: has Lenny done a morally good or bad thing? Surely it must be a good thing, we might reason, since due to Lenny's beneficence the poor and downtrodden have been fed. But Lenny bought this man a chicken sandwich, and the chickens that supply the fast food industry are raised on factory farms in cramped conditions where they never see the sun during their pitifully brief, six-week lifetimes. In order to prevent the birds from pecking each other to death, they are subjected to a hot-blade beak trimming procedure, causing them acute pain that often becomes chronic. There follow the indignities of the slaughterhouse, where the chicken's legs are put in metal shackles, they are hung upside down, their throats are slit, and often while still conscious, they are immerse dint he scalding tank before defeathering. The chicken in the chickens and wich that Lenny has bought for the beggar has most assuredly suffered these insults, but it is not only the chicken that has suffered. The lives of slaughterhouse employees, many of who mare readily exploitable immigrants, are notoriously dangerous, the rate of injury being about three times that of other factory workers (Schlosser, 2002, p. 172). The work itself is repetitive, boring, and often incredibly strenuous, and the conditions in which the se employees labor on the line and the kill floor are far worse than what one sees in the most stomach-churning of horror movies. The carton of milk, when its origins are carefully scrutinized, also leads one directly into an ethical mine field, made more complicated by the fact that distressed calves are separated from their mothers after only a day, and these calves go on to be come vealor play some other role in the meat industry, and so it's back to the problem soft he slaughter house. At least the garden salad is a straightforwardly healthy and ethical choice. Ah, but each of the ingredients was shipped thousands of miles, using untold gallons of fuel, thereby contributing to air pollution and climate change. The plastic container that the salad came in will also inevitably end up in a landfill, like billions upon billions of others much like it. Lenny could have gone to his local farmer's market and bought the ingredients for a salad there—although if Lenny lives in a cold climate, it's possible that many of the salad ingredients were grown in hothouses that, depending on how they're powered, may have a greater carbon foot print than a transport truck. Buying locally may not, in fact, be the ethical thing to do. The trouble is that Lenny knows all of this (as many of us do),and yet he buys the chicken sandwich, the garden salad, and the carton of milk regardless because he understands these to be nutritionally sound choices, and at that particular moment, he is genuinely more interested in feeding the poor than in pondering the ethics of factory farming and the environmental issues surrounding the origin of our food.6 And no matter what else may be true, it is assuredly the case that Lenny's intentions are good and that his heart is in the right place. In fact, some karma proponents (many Buddhists, for example) believe that the intention behind an action actually defines the moral quality of that action, and therefore good intentions inevitably result in

the formation of good karma. Sadly, in his enthusiasm, Lenny has failed to realize the implications of giving hard vegetables and a piece of chicken to a man with no teeth (he was a toothless beggar after all), and Lenny is horrified when the old tramp chokes to death, surrounded by embarrassed passersby busily ignoring him. Lenny has now killed a man and he can sense the bad karma plastering itself to his soul, until later that day when the tramp's middle-aged daughter tells him that her father was dying of cancer anyway, and so his quick passing was a great blessing. Happily, Lenny is taken to her home and is celebrated as a hero. Again, we might ask, "Has Lenny done a morally good thing, or not?" And how does karma, this moral law that can supposedly peer inside our head sand evaluate our every thought, assess so easily what is good and what isn't? What kind of calculation is karma able to perform? Consider the potential calculus: Intent to do good

+50 Cruelty to chickens -12 Smiling at the employee behind the counter (although this +1 puther in such a good mood she said "yes" to her assistant manager's proposal of marriage and is now doomed to an unhappy and abusive relationship. Ah well, unintended consequences...)

Supporting the atrocities of the slaughterhouse through -225 consumer purchases Although with out the slaughter house many employees +145 wouldn't be able to feed their families Buying milk from factory farmed cows -2 million because cows are sacred Failure to buy locally there by contributing to climate -5 change Killing a man due to negligence -1,000 Saving him from as low and painful death and lessening +750 the financial burden on his family due to extra health care costs Anyone who thinks that moral issues are black and white has not spent any time in an ethics class or, it might be argued, in the real world. This is what we in the early twenty-first century are being forced to wake up to—the reality that it is sometimes critically important to do the right thing while, at the same time, it is impossible to assess what the right thing is. We now know that most of our consumer choices fall into this category, and that the health of the planet depends on us, en masse, doing the right thing—but the right thing isn't always obvious and there are inevitably unintended consequences. Certainly intentions do count for something (legally, "intent" can be the difference between community service and life in prison), but surely they cannot count for everything. What's the old saying? Ah, yes: the road to rebirth is paved with good intentions. Imagining that we can accurately measure the ethics of our actions is a strangely puerile delusion, and treating morality as if it has a positive or negative balance that can be discerned on adivine scale is, in a word, asinine. It might makes enseat nursery school, where weare taught seemingly eternal truths such as "Hitting—bad!" but in the grownup world we find that our thoughts, words, deeds, and intentions are often subtle, nuanced, and not subject to easy assessment. And what about what we don't do? What if we actively a voidd oing what we know is wrong, but we don't actively go out of our way to do any good? The philosopher Peter Singer would tell us that, for example, if we don't give at least one percent of our income away to the desperately poor, we cannot claim to be leading moral lives (2009, p. 167). Does this mean that not givin gone percent of my income away will cause me to accrue bad karma, even though I've not actively done anything wrong? And what if Singer himself is mistaken and the cosmic law of karma, which must use some standard after all, requires that I ought to give away at least ten percent of my income, so that any less will ac crueal o ad of karmic debt? I might believe e that I'm behaving ethically by giving away one percent of my income, but by encouraging me to give only one percent, Singer is ensuring my future suffering on the wheel of life and death, and is surely securing the same fate for himself

with his loose talk. I don't mean to suggest that there are no moral truths to be discovered (seeHarris,2010),only that we can't know if these moral truths are identical to the ancient truths the universe uses to evaluate us. The problem of evaluation is insurmountable; we will never have access to that cosmic karmic measuring stick, and therefore its only practical use is to beat us senseless every time we get things wrong.

3.EDUCATION

In my opening dialogue, Lenny tells Pedro that karma is here to teach us to "straighten up and fly right"; in other words, karma's punishments are not only retributive, but also reformative, so that karma "is ultimately conducive to the highest good through moral education"(Nayak,1973,p.81).In analogy to parenting, the karmic model of moral education works like this: little Pedro misbehaves hundreds or even thousands of times and nothing happens—the rear no negative consequences and, in fact, little Pedro lives a life of ease and pleasure. Then one day while Pedro is playing peacefully in the drive way, his father backs over him again and again with the family minivan. "That' teach you to misbehave!" says Pedro's father. "But Papa!" cries little Pedro. "What did I do wrong?" "Oh no, I'm not telling you that. You figure it out." How, we might ask, is little Pedro supposed to figure it out? He's misbehaved hundreds of times without consequence; then, suddenly, in the midst of quiet play, he finds himself being tortured and told it is punishment—but for what? How can little Pedro know? As Arthur L. Herman points out:

One of the best guides we have for acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is the fact of the immediate results. . . . The law of karma, with its possible delayed results...throws this entire right-pleasure, wrong-pain machinery out of theoretical alignment. I can't trust the present consequences I get from present actions as a guide for future behaviour because pow! I may suddenly get paid back for what I thought was right by a semitrailer truck hauling concrete culverts.(1976,p.216)

It would be interesting to visit the asylum and meet the child raised by parents who educated their child in the way that karma is said to educate us. And I don't think that we need a direct quote; I think we can accurately guess what a professor of psychology or education would say about karma's program of moral teaching. "Loony" seems to describe the hypothesiss in ceitis obviously unmindful of how humans actually acquire morality. Generally, we learn well in an environment to fimmediate, loving, positive reinforcement when we do good, and immediate, gentle, and appropriate discipline when we mess up. Anyone who really believes that a sound moral education is based on threats of violence and pain, to be delivered at some undisclosed point in the future as a result of sins unknown and unknowable, is probably quite mad and, at the very least, shouldn't be a parent or an elementary schoolteacher. Will Pedro honestly learn to be good under the wheels of the family minivan? As he lies in the driveway, he may promise to be a better boy, but he won't learn how to be a better boy. Instead, what he'll learn is that someday there will be another mini van, and another, and another, throughout countless lives as he stumbles along like his friend Lenny, trying to guess at the relative karmic merits of buying chicken sandwiches and millions of other treacherous decisions besides. Karma is unnecessary as a moral guide because we have other, more refined and far superior methods of learning, and better reasons for behaving. Except for the psychopath, the Golden Rule and other basic moral precepts seem to be innate, and if we're paying even the slightest attention, moral lessons are reinforced day after day throughout a whole lifetime

by interacting with other people. We have good reasons to be moral, and karma isn't one of them (Shermer, 2004). Another of the ingenious tricks that religion has up its sleeve is to dismiss the fact that morality is learned at our mother's knee, and in its place make everyone believe that they (and their children) could never be trusted to behave without karma (or God) standing over them, ready to give them just what they deserve if they step out of line. It seems childishly obvious to point out that in order to learn from our mistakes, we need to remember what we did wrong; sadly, however, we can't remember our previous lifetimes, so the reason for our occasional beatings must forever remain a mystery. The memory problem is really a moot point, however, because even if we could remember our past lives in all their glorious detail, it wouldn't change the fact that we still can't know why we're being punished. As previously discussed, there is no rulebook—no cosmic gold standard for good behavior—or, if there is, we are not privy to the details. The memory problem is a valid secondary criticism, but the evaluation problem is primary and insurmountable, whether we remember our past livesornot.9 Karma doesn't educate us or offer guidance—it issues threats. Karma is, in fact, extortion. It secures good behavior through threats of violence and intimidation. As a means of moral education, therefore, karma fails monumentally.

4.EXPLANATION

The karma/rebirth hypothesis is advertised as an explanation for the presence of evil and suffering in the world, but in fact the amount of suffering that it actually accounts for is infinitesimally small. The law of karma applies only to suffering experienced by a moral agent who has transgressed the law in this or some other lifetime. It is predictably myopic of us to forget about the rest of our fellow creatures, but the question needs to be asked—what about the animals? They outnumber us by the trillions upon trillions, they are not moral agents who can transgress the law, and yet they suffer—often brutally. Why? A natural explanation unencumbered by religious dogma is straightforward enough, but not so in the topsy-turvy world of karma. If the law of karma ensures that we get exactly what we deserve on the basis of our moral conduct, and animals are amoral and yet they suffer, then it makes sense to postulate that a moral agent has regressed to an animal life form (as is commonly believed). There are hopeless problems with the idea that all animals are ex-humans, however. If every animal is a former human being, for example, then the number of humans who would have had to exist would be many orders of magnitude greater than the number that have actually existed. The problem of numbers is even more intractable when one considers that the total number of souls would not be equal to the number of humans who once lived plus those who are alive now, but far less than this since many people are supposedly reincarnated individuals. Perhaps there are astronomically enormous numbers of nonhuman moral agents—such as angels,demons,oraliens—toaccountforthedisparityinthenumbers;andwhy shouldn't there be, since postulating them doesn't make the theory of karma and rebirth any less believable? If, however, it is necessary to postulate regression to lower life-forms in order to account for animal suffering, then it becomes likely that our moral character actually degenerates through many lifetimes—that the direction is downward, not upward toward liberation— and it seems possible that we might all be trapped on the wheel of rebirth forever in an eternal fluctuation between not-so-bad and not-good-enough. I leave it to karma proponents to lose sleepover this chilling thought. Perhaps animals don't suffer as a form of punishment (how could they when they've not done anything wrong?), but in order to bank good karmic credits that they can apply to their next life as

they work their way up toward being reborn as moral agents. Maybe animals suffer horribly, possibly over trillions of lifetimes, in advance of becoming human. Or perhaps the karma/ rebirth hypothesis doesn't involve animals in any way, and animals suffer simply as a result of the way that the natural world has evolved. If true, it means that the karma/rebirth hypothesis explains a vanishingly small percentage of the suffering in the world. The misery endured by the animal kingdom redirects the question and makes it painfully obvious that karma fails spectacularly as a comprehensive explanation for evil and suffering.

5.ETHICS

The theory of karma and rebirth tells us in no uncertain terms that there is no unjust suffering in the universe. What a comfort this is to know! What a relief it is to think that each one of us deserves the on coming bus, the kidney stone, the amputation, the cancerous tumor, the sexual abuse, the trip to the gas chambers with millions of our fellows—every time. And ultimately, as has been previously stated, the seap parently tragic events are all, in a sense, good things because it is through suffering that we work off our bad karma, and therefore the more we suffer, the closer we are to the goal of liberation from the wheel of birth and death. Hopefully there isn't a reader who hasn't flinched with acute discomfort at the notion that any human being deserves the extreme horrors that are in store for many of us, including death, of course—the inevitable end in store for us all. Believing that someone deserves to suffer with, say, a nasty cold is one thing; believing that any normal person deserves to be raped and dismembered is quite another. Who among us would dare to look the mother of a stillborn baby in the eye and say, "You had it coming, and so did your baby. You brought it on yourself." And what about the victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks? Who would like to be first to opine that the whole business was their fault, and that if they had been better, more moral people, they wouldn't have died in such tragic circumstances? For decent human beings, instances of extreme evil and suffering are where the theory of karma really falls to the ground. It is when we examine the extreme cases—torture, slavery, genocide, and so on—that karma is exposed as the crude and despicable doctrine that it really is. Karma is marketed as a philosophy that tells you that you control your future by being morally upright and holy—but the flip side is that karma brazenly and unabashedly blames the victim of any misfortune, no matter how appalling the misfortune may be. Of course, the rear e no victims under the law of karma—no rape victims, no murder victims—as those who are raped and murdered bring these things on themselves. But, it seems reasonable to ask, does anyone really believe this? If people seriously believed that we bring evil onto ourselves, every court case would be dismissed with the judge proclaiming, "I find the victim guilty!" and the justice system would be total chaos. Perhaps karma had some power as an explanation in primeval, preliterate, ignorant, and savage times when people didn't have the faintest clue what was going on, but now that we have real explanations (in terms of germs, genes, shifting tectonic plates, defective social structures, and so on), karma has been rendered power less to explain anything. But, you might object, surely nobody really does carry belief in karma to such unpleasant extremes. Maybe there are believers who think that only some of our suffering is due to past immoral actions and that sometimes, as the saying goes, shit happens. Indeed, there are proponents of the karma/ rebirth hypothesis who tell us that only some of our suffering is due to our bad karma (Sharma, 2008, p. 574); however, such a rounding of karma's hard edges effectively destroys its alleged ability to explain the presence of evil in the world (it

may—or may not—be due to your bad karma; we don't know) and renders it even less effective (if that's possible) as a means of moral education. Approximately what percentage of the bad things that happen to me might I ascribe to my bad karma? Anything less than one hundred percent effectively knocks the stuffing out of the idea that karma explains my suffering, and on a sliding scale provides ever less in centive for moral behavior. But is the karma/rebirth hypothesis really as unethical as all that? Am I not overstating the case to prove a theoretical point that doesn't exist in the real world? In reply I would present a social problem to solve: how do you convince generations of people to muck out your sewers for you? Let's say that you live in Delhi, where the sewers are ancient and completely in capable of handling the excrement of over twelve million people. How do you make someone (we'll call him Pedro) believe that it's his personal duty to descend into the filth and the overwhelming stench, wearing only his underwear and maybe a pair of rubber gloves if he's lucky, and personally clear the city's blocked drains, for which he'll be handsomely rewarded with a flood of human feces pouring over him and about one hundred dollars a month? In all likelihood Pedro will die before he retires, of course, and throughout his life he'll be plagued by sores, various diseases, breathing troubles—in short, his life will be a daily hell—but here's the truly amazing part: he won't even try to escape his situation in life."I live smelling death, but it is fine," he will tell you (Jha, 2009). He will even be grateful for the work because he can support his family (although why any woman would want to reproduce with someone who smells like Pedro is perhaps the biggest mystery to be found in thisentirepaper). How is this miracle of social engineering to be achieved? First, make sure that Pedro comes from the Dalit, or untouchable, caste, and whatever you do, don't educate him—he's got to feel unworthy and appreciative of every little scrap that gets thrown his way. In essence, treat him like the excrement that he's bound to spend his life swimming in. Second, tell him that due to sins committed in his past lives, it's his own fault that he was born an untouchable—it certainly has nothing to do with expedient social structures that almost seem calculated to benefit the people in the higher castes, who wield all the power. No, no—heavens, no. Third—and this is the best part—convince Pedro that there's absolutely no way out of his misery in this life, and that his only hope for a better life next time around is to fulfill the duties of his caste to the letter, and those duties just happen to include a lifetime underground covered in human waste. In other words, make Pedro believe in karma and rebirth and—bingo—you've got your self a docile workhorse who won't even question his fate and (this just keeps getting better) will even raise his own sons to believe that they, too, must spend their lives covered in human waste in order to work off their bad karma. The sewers get cleaned at little cost, Pedro gets the satisfaction of knowing that he'll advance up the karmic ladder of death and rebirth, and, in short, everybody wins! A sone writer notes:

The concept of karma perfectly justifies the caste system based on birth. It favors the argument that people of lower castes have to blame themselves for their plight because of their bad karma in their past lives. Their pitiable plight is a stern warning to the rest of the humanity that the wheel of dharma operates inexorably, sparing none and favoring none. This line of argument is found in many scriptures, including the Bhagavadgita, according to which people of good merit and those who had developed detachment or dispassion were born in pious families. . . . By combining the belief in karma with the caste system, the ancient lawmakers prescribed different vocational and occupational duties for each caste and expected people to follow them sincerely as an integral part of their religious duty. Observing these duties without questioning them was an act of merit, which

entitled them to progress on the path of dharma and obtaina better life in the next birth.(Vemulapalli,2006)

It may seem impossible to believe that this sort of situation exists in the twenty-first century, but a quick Internet search on India's sewers reveals the truth and the explicit reason for it—the karma/rebirth hypothesis in action. And it isn't just in India where these sorts of nutty beliefs take their toll. Consider this story from Thailand:

A close friend of mine had a ten-year marriage with a husband who was an alcoholic. With immense suffering, she went to see a monk and ask for spiritual guidance. The monk said to her, "Be patient and keep making more merit...so that one day the accumulated merit will help improve your life. "That same monk gave similar advice to her friend whose husband was having an affair with another woman. The monk told her friend, "There is nothing you can do about it. Keep being nice to him. Do not ever challenge his behaviour, because you have done bad karma to him in your previous life." This is what Buddhist women, not only in Thailand but elsewhere, hear over and over.(Khuankaew,2009,p.207)

In other words, "Don't blame the patriarchal structure of your society. It's a personal predicament, not a social one. And don't think that the problem is the booze or the other women—the problem is you. You deserve to be a doormat, so let your husband do whatever he wants. It's your punishment, but hey—better luck next life! "The teller of this story believes that the monk is misinterpreting the karma/rebirth theory, but surely this is just the classical karma theory of India(CKTI) in all its grandeur:

This way of understanding karma supports cultural violence. It legitimates an entire religious culture that effectively tells people to be passive and subservient, not only to religious authority but to other forms of social authority. This in turn legitimates structural violence; for example, economic disparity—the gap between rich and poor—is depicted as a result of differences in personal karmic fate. This ultimately leads to the conditions for direct violence when governments are seen as legitimate in violently oppressing those who reject their marginalized situation.(Watts,2009,p.16)

There may be believers who insist that karma and rebirth are misunderstood and who want to rescue these concepts to promote their own healthy social agendas—and more power to them—but the fact remains that the CKTI is the popular conception of karma and rebirth, and that people live their lives by these principles with predictable results. It's no good saying that karma shouldn't be interpreted in this or that manner; there can be a Jain interpretation, a Hindu interpretation, a New Age interpretation, and so on, but in a system dreamt up by human imagination with no evidence to back it up, and available for any one to co-opt for their own purposes, there can be no such thing as heresy. It also seems extraordinary to talk about the "correct" interpretation of something that has no more credibility than a fairy tale. In what sense is the story of karma true or untrue? It's like as king for the correct interpretation of the story of The Three Little Pigs: did the wolf eat the first two little pigs, or did they escape to the home of the third pig? Neither version is untrue. In the same way, there can be no true interpretation of karma and rebirth. The real issue is how believers understand the theory that they call their own, and it is this understanding that

continues to promote miseryandruin.12 The immorality of the karma/rebirth hypothesis extends beyond its blame-the-victim mentality, however. Just as significant is the metaproblem of believing in a theory for which there is no evidence and—in the curious case of karma—for which all of the evidence confirms the opposite (life isn't fair) to be all too true. The peril of believing anything that takes our fancy is famously laid out in W.K.Clifford's essay The Ethics of Belief:

The danger to society is not merely that it should believe wrong things, though that is greate nough; butt hat its hould be come credulous, and lose the habit of testing things and inquiring into them; forth enit must sink back into savagery. . . . It may matter little to me, in my cloud-castle of sweet illusions and darling lies; but it matters much to Man that I have made my neighbors ready to deceive. The credulous man is father to the liar and the cheat. (Clifford, 1879,pp.185–186)

6.ELABORATION

Now let us engage in an interesting perspective-generating exercise by comparing the karma/rebirth theory, with all of its outlandish claims believed by millions, to the machine that counts the number of sleepers around the world as describe edin the 1962 classic Dr.Seuss's Sleep Book: Counting up sleepers..? Just how do we do it..? Really quite simple. There's nothing much to it. We find out how many, we learn the amount By an Audio-Telly-o-Tally-o Count. On amount a in, half way between Reno and Rome, We have a machine in a plexiglass dome Which listens and looks into everyone's home. And when ever it sees a new sleeper go flop, It jiggle sand lets a new Biggel-Balldrop. Our chap counts these balls as they plup in a cup. And that's how we know who is down and who's up.(Dr.Seuss,1962,p.18) To a child this scenario sounds entirely possible—even scientific. A machine listens and looks into our homes; when we go to sleep it jiggles, causing a Biggel-Ball to plop in a cup, and someone totals the number of balls to determine how many creatures are asleep. This sounds straightforward enough—so what's the problem? As adults, I assume that we all recognize Dr. Seuss' invention for the fantastical contraption that it actually is. We know that it isn't possible, for example, to install surveillance equipment of the kind necessary for counting sleeping creatures in all the homes, jungles, deserts, and oceans of the world (and it certainly isn't desirable, let alone legal).Just as importantly, how does the machine tell if a creature is actually asleep or not? Being supine isn't enough—there are a lot of things besides sleep we can do while lying down, and so we immediately run into the problem of evaluation. Who is the ball counting chap, and how is it possible for one person to count ninety-nine zillion nine trillion and three Biggel-Balls in only one night? There are too many sleepers to keep track of, surely. The illustration clearly shows a creature doing the counting, not a computer, and even though his hat is attached by a wire to some sort of central processing unit, it seems obvious that that many Biggel-Balls couldn't plop in a cup in only one night. And how do we define night? While it's nigh there, it's day elsewhere. These insurmountable problems and others expose Dr. Seuss' machine as the obvious fiction that it really is. Their on yis that although the claims Dr. Seuss makes for his machine are absurd beyond all believability, these claims are far more realistic, and there fore far more believable, than the claims made by the karma/rebirth hypothesis. Dr. Seuss' machine merely counts sleepers—it doesn't have to keep track of how much sleep each sleeper has had, or evaluate the nature of the sleep, or orchestrate future events over possibly infinite lifetimes depending on the quality of the sleep and soon. It doesn't punish people

who have slept badly. Although tricky, it is significantly easier to determine if someone is a sleep or not than it is to evaluate whether a particular thought, word, or deed is immoral, or whether or not someone's intentions are pure. And unlike karma, we know the answer to the "how" question; we know that there is a central processing unit, on a mountain half way between Reno and Rome, that listens and looks into everyone's home. The mechanism is explained, unlike karma's mechanism, which must for ever remain a mystery. The "how" question is one of the frustrating, though predictable, aspects of investigating karma. The nuts and bolts of the system are never discussed; instead, there is a lot of hand-waving and talk of karma and rebirth being at work within the realm of metaphysics (whatever that might mean). That the karmic calculus works, somehow, is simply assumed by the believer in the same way that magic is assumed to work by Harry Potter fans. So the karma proponent must believe that an impersonal law of the cosmos is looking into everyone's minds,listening to what everyone says, and watching everyone's actions; that this impersonal law remembers everything that everyone has ever thought, said, or done over countless, possibly infinite, lifetimes; that it uses a moral standard unknowable to us to accurately evaluate every thought, word, and deed; and, perhaps most incredibly, that this impersonal law makes sure that everyone, at all times, is getting exactly what they deserve. Such a mind-bogglingly complex dance between all seven billion of us would be a formidable task for even the most accomplished choreographer, but that's the alleged super computing power of the law of karma. The believer might charge the skeptic with concocting an argument from incredulity (just because it sounds impossible doesn't mean that it actually is impossible), but the "how" question isn't meant as an argument at all. It's a simple question whose answer is oddly absent from the literature.

7.ELUCIDATION?

Perhaps God is the answer to the "how" question, and it is He who looks into our minds and knows all, remembers all from life to life, evaluates our actions according to His perfect understanding, and personally organizes the intricate dance, with ever-changing partners, that ensures that each of us get whatever we deserve. God is generally defined as omnipotent, and is there fore the perfect celestial being for the job of karmic overseer—although providing a definition of a supernatural entity that may or may not exist, and showing that such an entity actually exists, are two very different exercises. However, let us for the moment assume that God, as normally defined (as all powerful, all-good, and all-knowing) does exist. Does factoring a heavenly being into the equation render the problem any more intelligible? The trouble with invoking God (well, one of the troubles) is that whenever He is introduced as a solution to any difficulty, it seems that another difficulty inevitably arises. In this case that difficulty is the problem of evil. According to most believers, God is all-powerful, all-good, and all-knowing. However, if God were all-powerful, he could prevent evil; and if He were all good, he would prevent evil. And yet evil exists. How can this be? The karma/rebirth hypothesis seems almost miraculously able to explain why evil exists in a way that protects God from having to get involved or take any responsibility. Evil and its consequent suffering is always, and only, due to immoral thoughts, words, or deeds originating from a particular individual in this life, or any one of a number of past lives, lived by that same individual. No matter how appalling an individual's suffering might be, the proponent of the karma/rebirth hypothesis canal ways attribute it "top revious misdeeds done in previous lives, and the puzzle over extraordinary evil is solved with no harm done to the majesty and holiness of Deity" (Herman,

1976, p. 287). This justification for evil is an improvement over original sin, which also places the blame for the introduction of evil into the world squarely upon the shoulders of human beings (e.g., see Romans 5:12–21 and 1Corinthians15:22).The doctrine of original sin, however, blames the many for the sins of the one—a situation that is grossly unfair to the innocent. In addition, without the doctrine of rebirth, there is no explanation for the fact that people are born into radically unequal circumstances. Not only this, but the karma/rebirth hypothesis deftly eliminates various inadequate solutions to the problem of evil (which theologians have gravely wrestled with forover a thousand years). These include: unjust suffering will be recompensedin Heaven; evil and suffering are illusions; evil is caused by Satan; and the presence of evil is a mystery that we just have to accept. And, at the risk of sounding like a religious tract, karma and rebirth have other advantages, such as eliminating once and for all the intensely horrifying concept of eternal damnation and giving us additional time through multiple lives for spiritual growth. Thus the proponent of karma and rebirth can rest easy knowing that God remains both omnipotent and wholly benevolent. Or so it would seem at first blush. In fact, however, if an omnipotent, omnibenevolent deity is postulated in connection with karma and rebirth, many of the tiresome old problems arise, and still others are created. What if karma is a manifestation of God's will? What if, without His divine supervision, "there can be no guarantee that the justice will be eternal and perfect"(Nayak,1973,p.78),and so God is directly involved in karma's administration? Then God cannot be wholly good because, by willing karma, He necessarily wills evil. Karma depends on evil; thus, if Go disincharge of the law, He must somehow withstand the age-old charge of callousness. In fact, however, karma makes the traditional charge much worse since the results of the law can be so appallingly brutal. As previously noted, an individual's bad karma can mature over many lifetimes and ripen all at once, causing an onslaught of intolerable suffering. This is ruthless, and if God will sit, then He must answer for it. If God created the entire universe, then He is also the creator of the law of karma, in which case it seems fair to ask how such a nice god could come up with such a sadistic law. How strange it is that an omnipotent designer should create (a) an obstacle course and (b) creatures who are incapable of navigating through it, and then viciously punish the creatures for the very faults and frailties that He himself designed into the species. A god who is ultimately responsible for the acquisition of bad karma, and therefore for enduring ferocious suffering on the wheel of death and rebirth, obviously cannot be called benevolent unless we redefine "benevolent" to mean its opposite. The Indian theologian Ramanuja attempted to counter this objection by claiming that the world is beginning less, but this suggestion ignores the problem rather than solving it. The issue is that at some stage in a soul's journey, it goes off the rails. Postulating a beginning less beginning "is not so much an explanation as an indefinite postponement of an explanation. Why and how does the reincarnating individual first go wrong?" (Alan Watts, quoted in Herman, 1976, p. 262). And who, ultimately, is responsible for the possibility of creationgoingawry?14 As Herman asks:

What if karma is in charge of God? Then, clearly, He is not omnipotent. This objection might be met by asserting that God is not bound by karma but instead freely chooses to work within its boundaries because it is a just law, and God Himself is just. It might be argued, however, that precisely because God is wholly just He cannot violate the law of karma and is therefore not omnipotent. Karma seems to severely limit God's power: For if there is indeed a cosmic force, karma, and cosmic results of this force, samsara, operating independently of the will of God, then

God's power would seem to be curtailed. But just as Saint Thomas' God could not raise an un raisable stone, so also it might be countered here, [God] cannot make the universe unjust. And surely to alter karmic laws for one's own purposes would be unjust. (Herman, 1976,pp.275–276)

However, God might well be capable of violating the law of karma. There are certainly a large proportion of karma proponents who maintain that God can"over-ride the power of karma to draw repentant sinners to Him"(Ramanuja,quotedinO'Flaherty,1976,p.16). Certainly if God cannot suspend the law whenever He chooses, there is no scope for divine grace, and no escape from the in exorable law of retribution:

On this view...God is no better than a hard task-master who imposes certain heavy duties on his servants and gives them their wages at the end of their work. . . . If we cannot escape the law of retribution, why should we pray to God for His mercy; . . . what can we expect to gain from the love of God? (Nayak,1973,p.78)

Sadly, the assertion that God can suspend the law of karma whenever the spirit moves Him raises at least two intractable problems. First, there is the tiresome "no evidence" problem once again, and at this point it isn't easy to keep track of just how many dogmas, like drunken sailors, are propping each other up for support.15 Second, if forgiveness—and therefore escape from punishment—is bestowed upon anyone "consequent upon deep penitence, prayer, and surrender of one's self to the Lord," then God can be said to be merciful, but not just. Justice and mercy are mutually exclusive concepts. To illustrate this point, imagine that Lenny and Pedro have committed identical crimes under identical conditions; justice dictates that they should be punished alike. If, however, a kind-hearted judge gives Lenny five years (consequent upon groveling, entreaties, and flattering the judge) but gives Pedro fifteen years, this cannot be said to be justice because the two men are not being treated equally. In a court of law justice occurs when every individual who performs the same misdeed, under the same conditions, is given the same sentence. We value this system of doling out punishments because it ensures fairness; it isn't random, and it doesn't play favorites. The same restriction must surely also apply to a cosmic, celestial judge; if God shows mercy to some people, or even to all people, then the law of karma clearly isn't a law, and rewards and punishments are actually distributed according to His divine whim.16 In the courtroom, only chaos could result from a merciful judge who let criminals off the hook because they knew how to brown-nose in the preferred manner. Thus it would appear that God is caught in a no-win situation as far as the law of karma is concerned:

If God is in control of the law of karma then He is involved with the suffering and misery dispensed through . . . the law. . . . If God is not in control of the law of karma and it works independently and autonomously of God, then either God is not all powerful, or we are involved with the problem of Evil, or both.(Herman,1976,p.277)

Ramanuja attempted to defend the Almighty by asserting that although God did create the universe, He did not create it with the intention of creating evil. God's creation, says Ramanuja, is mere sport (līlā) (Brahma Sutra II. Objections to Karma and Rebirth: An Introduction 493 1.33), and sport is neither purposeful nor purposeless activity. God is like a guileless child who plays and creates simply for the joy of it, without aim, intention, or purpose. Ramanujaal so compares Him

to a man of leisure and says that, “we see in ordinary life how some great king...possessing perfect strength, valour, and so on, has a game at balls, or the like, from no other motive than to amuse himself” (Herman, 1976, p. 267). Evil, then, is an accidental consequence of God’s little games and, since He didn’t intend it, He cannot possibly beheld responsible for it:

Unfortunately,theideaoflīlāsolvesnothing,forwhilelīlāmaybeapurposeless act, it is surely an activity about which we can ask Who did it? That is to say, labelling līlā as merely motiveless, goalless sport, sensible enough in itself, does not rule out asking, Whose intention was it to engage in this motive less activity? God is not responsible for the purposes in līlā, for supposedly ther eare none, but He is surely responsible for the act that brings līlāinto existence. [Is God not] responsible and to blame for what happens after līlā is over, or after separate acts of līlā have been made[?] (Herman, 1976, pp. 268–269)

Imagining God as a childlike figure at play, accidentally causing all of that naughty evil, trivializes suffering in away that is unacceptable to anyone with even an ounce of empathy. Besides this, games can be played well or badly; why, then, does God play his little games like a bull in the china shop of the universe?

8.END

The karma/rebirth system concerns itself with morality to the exclusion of all else. “We shall be annihilated by-and-by if we are good enough” (Clifford, 1879, p. 196)—this is the grand promise of the karma/rebirth philosophy. It doesn’t matter how intelligent you are, or how creative, artistic, interesting, healthy, funny, insightful, persistent, courageous, or any other desirable quality, except as it relates to morality. What matters for karma is what matters to Santa Claus, and here we see a crude rule of human justice inflated out of all proportion, with that “puny standard” made into “the law and aim of the cosmos”(Herman,1976,p.227):

A vast world system which exists only as a convenience for turning endlessly on a wheel of ignorance with no issue except a final chance of stepping out of it, is not a world with any real reason for existence. A world which serves only as a school of sin and virtue and consists of a system of rewards and whippings, does not make any better appeal to our intelligence. The soul or spirit within us . . . cannot be sent here solely to be put to school for this kind of crude and primitive moral education. (Aurobindo Ghose, quoted in Herman, 1976,p.226)

To recap:

1. The karma/rebirth fantasy is one that is supported by no evidence— and, as Christopher Hitchens reminds us, “That which can be asserted without evidence can be dismissed without evidence”(2003).

2. It doesn’t provide any kind of moral education since cause is separated from effect, and there is no way to accurately evaluate actions given that we know nothing of the standards of the celestial system that performs the assessment.

3. Suffering boots people off of the wheel of rebirth, and thus karma doesn’t provide any compelling reason not to inflict suffering on others.

4. Karma and rebirth have caused great harm by contributing to social inertia and by duping the disadvantaged into believing that their only way out of the system is by fulfilling their duty, i.e., enduring a life of abject servitude, often in appalling conditions.

5. Karma's "blame-the-victim" mentality, especially in cases of extreme evil and suffering, demonstrates what an abhorrent doctrine it really is.

6. The karma/rebirth theory provides no comprehensive explanation of evil.

7. Believing in a doctrine with no supporting evidence is itself morally questionable.

8. It is easier to believe in Dr. Seuss' Telly-o-Tally-o Sleep Accounting Machine than to believe karma's preposterous claims.

9. If God is introduced to solve karma's problems, this is like cutting the head off the hydra—more heads, or problems, inevitably arise.

Given all of this, it is fair to conclude that karma and rebirth have been granted more than enough time on the world stage, and it is time to wheel them behind the curtain and file them away in a repository marked beliefs, in a dossier marked ancient, virulent, maladaptive, cockamamie... and dangerous.

Is There Adequate Empirical Evidence for Reincarnation? An Analysis of Ian Stevenson'sWork by Leonard Angel

Ian Stevenson (1918–2007) received widespread acclaim for pioneering steadfast empirical research into whether or not there is reincarnation or rebirth. His investigation of what he called "cases of the reincarnation type" led Reincarnation International to call him "the top rebirth scientist" (Stemman,1995,p.34).

1. HOW CONTROLLED EXPERIMENTALWORK IS POSSIBLE

During his research, Stevenson found it quite difficult to secure ideal empirical evidence for reincarnation from his case studies. For instance, in one of his early works (Stevenson, 1966/1974) he reviewed difficulties such as the "Detection and Disposition of Possible Errors in Collecting Data," the "Possible Errors of Interpreters," the "Methods of Recording and Possible Errors," and so on. In fact, Stevenson thought that anecdotal research was required for his project because it was practically impossible, he assumed, to do controlled experimental research on the subject. However, as I will show below, it is possible to do practical, controlled experimental work in this area. Yet contemporary researchers have failed to conduct any such research at all; so the existing research is, at the very least, inadequate. Researchers could do practical, controlled experimental work on reincarnation in the following manner (as noted in Angel, 2008). One should try to determine whether the sorts of correspondences found between a living person's verbal memory claims and the facts about a purportedly reincarnated deceased person defy chance expectations. If they do, then there is something that needs to be explained. But if they don't, then there is nothing to be explained. Now it is possible to assemble two sorts of cases. First, there can be memory statements about a person A's own (ordinarily understood) life, and also facts about a

person B who could not have been a past life of person A. The easiest way to guarantee this is to have a case where persons A and B were alive at the same time for many years; let us call such apaira "co-living pair." Such cases can be labeled "X cases." Second, there can be statements about supposed memories of people who had died shortly before there membering person was born—let's call there membering person C, and the previous person D—and yet the facts that Cclaims to remember as being true of D are often true of D. These sorts of cases can be labeled "Y cases." Then all that one needs to do is make sure that (a) the correspondences of co-living pairs in X cases are as good as those between pairs in Y cases and (b) subjects (without knowing which case belongs to the X group or the Y group) tend to ask for special explanations of the correspondences in the Y cases more often than they tend to ask for special explanations of the correspondences in the X cases. Oddly enough, many facts about me happen to be true of Stevenson as well. I discovered most of these facts in his New York Times obituary (Fox, 2007).Here are twenty-one such facts where I am A and Stevenson is B(here a "past life of A" refers to A's ordinarily remembered life): (1) A remembers his past life as having being born in Montreal, Canada. B was born in Montreal, Canada. (2) A remembers his past life as having received a bachelor's degree from McGill University. B received a bachelor's degree from McGill University. (3) A remembers his past life as having received a doctoral degree some time after completing the bachelor's degree. B received a doctoral degree some time after completing his bachelor's degree. (4) A remembers his past life as having been married twice. B was married twice. (5) A remembers his past life's mother as having been interested in spirituality. B's mother was interested in spirituality. (6) A remembers his past life as one in which his childhood-and-youth home had a big library. B's home during his childhood and youth had a big library. (7) A remembers of his past life that the big library in his home in his youth stimulated his past life's interest in many matters of importance in understanding human nature. B's big library in his youth stimulated his interest in many matters of importance in understanding human nature.(8) A remembers his past life as having been a member of a family in which he had not only a sister, but also a brother. B was a member of a family in which he had not only a sister, but also a brother. (9)A remembers his past life as having endorsed scientific method. B endorsed

 scientific method. (10) A remembers his past life as having gone through a phase of being positively impressed with the work of Sigmund Freud, and then moving in another direction, thinking that Freud's work was too unscientific. B went through a phase of being positively impressed with the work of Sigmund Freud. Then B moved in another direction, thinking that Freud's work was too unscientific. (11) A remembers his past life as having spent some time as the head/chair of his academic department. B spent some time as the head/chair of his academic department.(12) A remembers his past life as having investigated specific claims about memories. B investigated specific claims about memories. (13) A remembers his past life as having been cautious in public if asked for comments. If asked for a comment in public, B would be cautious about what he would say. (14) A remembers his past life as having been primarily interested in human nature. The primary interest in B's thinking was human nature. (15) A remembers his past life as having developed some unusual views, given the range of views found expressed in the refereed literature. B developed some unusual views, given the range of views found expressed in the refereed literature. (16) A remembers his past life as having expressed some views that were quickly dismissed in what the

past life thought was a "knee-jerk" sort of way. B took it that some of his views had been quickly dismissed in what he thought was a "knee-jerk" sort of way. (17) A remembers of his past life that, despite having expressed views that many took to have been "knee-jerk" rejected, he persisted in publishing the results of his thinking in journals and books. Despite having expressed views that many took to have been "knee-jerk" rejected, B persisted in publishing the results of his thinking in journals and books. (18) A remembers his past life as having published a book in a particular year, and that his past life had worked on that book for many years previously. B published a book in that year, and had worked on that book for many years previously. (19) A remembers of his past life that the book (published that year) was a compendium. The book that B published that year was a compendium. (20) A remembers of his past life that his past life published four books, some of them with technical details for technically minded readers. B published four books, some of them with technical details for technically minded readers. (21) A remembers of his past life that he coded some information in a way that he alone knew about. B coded some information in a way that he alone knew about. (These A to B correspondences—in case 20, as of the date of composition—are accurate of Stevenson and of me.) To determine that the X cases have at least as good resemblance patterns as the Y cases, one must conduct a preliminary experiment. One must double-blindedly ask subjects if they can differentiate the X cases from the Y cases. Only if one finds that subjects cannot do so does one continue with the experimentation. In other words, the level of resemblances in the X cases has to be high enough so that they seem to be as good as there semblances in the Y cases, and then the experiment can be done. Let us assume, quite plausibly, that there semblances seem to be fine. Next one conducts the true experiment. One takes a mixed up bunch of X and Y cases—say, a total of twenty—and gives them, by a double-blind method, to a group of people, asking the group which of the cases need a special explanation. One is looking, then, for something beyond resemblance; one is looking for cases that need special explanation. Then one receives the group's selections and determines whether the proportional percent of the X cases chosen in relation to the proportional percent of the Y cases chosen departs from what one would expect by chance. If there is no departure from chance, then not only are the X cases as good as the Y cases in resemblances, but there is also no need for a special explanation of any of the Y cases. For in that case there is no breakage of "the null hypothesis." Like wise, if the proportion al percent of the X cases chosen is higher than the proportional percent of the chosen Y cases, then any paranormal hypotheses are undone. In both scenarios there would be nothing for the paranormal is to study. My contention is that Stevenson and others doing so-called empirical research into reincarnation have not even attempted to show that there is anything that needs to be explained here. "Others" includes Satwant Pasricha (1990), Jim Tucker (2005), Antonia Mills (1994; 2000), Emily Williams Kelly (2007, pp. 233–235), Edward F. Kelly (2007, p. 596n11), and Alexander Moreira-Almeida (2006,p.252–253) in various works. Much worthwhile material may be found in their (and similar authors') writings, but a good analyst will simply ask: "How about doing the experimental work that can be done? How about eliminating the null hypothesis about the cases of focus?" Perhaps the connections between one person and another are often subjectively "striking." But that is not enough. Perhaps they are so subjectively "striking" that when one finds such connections between a child's supposed memory and the life of a person who died slightly before the child was born, one wants to find a special psychicor paranormal explanation of the connections. But there may be no particular need for such an explanation. Controlled experimental

research needs to be done to determine whether the connections that have been found between children's supposed memories and deceased persons' lives are in any way beyond what wewould expect by chance alone. Such controlled experimental work has not been done at all, let alone satisfactorily, for those who prefer some paranormal hypothesis—including that of reincarnation or rebirth.

2. THE ANECDOTAL RECORD

Nonetheless, some will want to review the anecdotal research itself. And when we do look at it, we find numerous errors. In fact, we find so many errors that it is not difficult to conclude that that work has few merits, if any. In order to show this, I will briefly review two of Stevenson's analyses: first, the investigations in his massively large Reincarnation and Biology (1997), which I previously reviewed (Angel, 2002), and second, what is among the best of Stevenson's research in Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation, the case of Imad Elawar in Lebanon (1966/1974, pp. 274–320), which I also reviewed elsewhere(1994a;1994b,pp.273–291).

2.1 Reincarnation and Biology

There are several problems with Reincarnation and Biology. Number one, it is unusually difficult to find one's way around the book. Given only the main subject in a case, how does one look up that case? How does one find the cases from which Stevenson makes tabulations in other places? And so on. Number two, what is claimed in one place does not always correspond with what is documented in another. Number three, there are numerous little—but serious—errors throughout the book. Here are a few examples of each of these problems. In regards to problem one, Stevenson (1997, p. 1014) states that (a) he won't count a birthmark site as matching the relevant past-life wound site, scar, or other mark unless it would fall within a 10 cm square area if projected onto an adult body, and (b) many of his cases satisfy a tighter 5 cm square area.(Birthmarks it e sand their correspondences to supposed past-life wound sites, scars, or other marks are used everywhere in the examination.) In Table 15.1, Stevenson lists thirty-three cases of double matches, and only one case issue da san example of a double match in which a 5cm square area is found for each match. This is a showcase example, so one would expect Stevenson to be sure that it is a good example, and some might want to check his claims. The claims are about the Chanai Choomalaiwong case, but that case is hard to find other than by reading the vast book page by page, or by flipping through it. Short of that, or of making one's own notes as one reads, the only way to follow up on the case is by consulting the case index at the end of volume 2; but there one finds thirty-three instances of the name of the case to look up. And so most people, it seems, wouldn't bother to check. However, anyone who does will find the original Chanai Choomalaiwong case about 800 pages away from Stevenson's Table 15.1. In this way it is unusually difficult to find one's way around the book. On problem two, one finds strange gaps in the build-up of supposed evidence. Once again, in Table 15.1 Stevenson maintained that the Chanai Choomalaiwong case is one where there is a 5 cm squared match for each of two matches. Yet when one manages to find the Chanai Choomalaiwong case, no evidence is presented for either of those two 5 cm square area matches. For details, see Angel (2002), where gaps in other such cases are alsonoted. As for problem three, I will simply point out two examples of small, yet significant, errors in the birthmark-case compilation. First, Stevenson incorrectly claims that he has done a satisfactory probability analysis, ultimately

concluding that “the probability that a person will have a single birthmark corresponding in location to a wound[or other mark]isonly1/160”(1997,p. 1136). But he obtains this figure by using an abstract grid of squares on a human body. Assuming that the grid has a fixed location on the body, if one mark were near a line on a grid of squares, and another mark were just on the other side of that line, those two marks would not count as being close together; yet they would be as close together as you like. In place of a grid of squares, then, what is required is a radius out from a mark, generating circles. It is the diagonal of the 10 cm square that gives Stevenson’s maximum distance between one thing and another. Using that maximum distance, the 1/160 probability would be enormously reduced to about 1/26 probability. That makes a big difference. The little confusion generates serious consequences. Second, in the Tali Sowaid case, there are supposed to have been two hyperpigmented macules on the subject, one on the left cheek and the other on the right. These are supposed to correspond to a bullet entry and exit wound of the previous life. But the hyperpigmented macules were not noticed on the subject at birth (1997, p. 380). Stevenson noted that hyperpigmented macules typically develop during life, that the average adult has fifteen of them, and that these are typically not present at birth. He grants that he has reasoned backward from birthmarks to wounds(1997,p.932). And he may well have reasoned backward to the existence of the hyperpigmented macules at birth. But what legitimated his backward reasoning? Not much, it seems. So this amounts to a kind of slippery reasoning at best. Again, a little confusion seems to have serious consequences. There are far too many problems in the analysis provided in Reincarnation and Biology to elaborate upon here. The reader who wants more details about the problems sketched above and other difficulties should consult Angel(2002).

2.2 The Imad Elawar Case

Now let’s briefly look at what might well be the best case in Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation, the Imad Elawar case. Not only did Stevenson favor various features of this case (1966/1974, p. 4, 385), but it was also researched in the first instance by Stevenson himself.

There is an intriguing anomaly in the case. When Stevenson first interviewed the family of the boy Imad Elawar, who had apparent past-life memories, his parents said that the boy thought that he was previously Mahmoud Bouhamzy of a town called Khriby, that he had had a wife called Jamilah, and that he had been fatally injured by a truck after a quarrel with its driver. Yet the person Stevenson ultimately identified as having had the past life of the boy was not Mahmoud Bouhamzy, and this person had not been fatally injured by a truck at all (which includes being fatally injured by a truck after a quarrel with its driver), nor ever been married. Apparently, the person identified did not have these characteristics because the information Stevenson initially received may have been faulty, so Stevenson subsequently asked the child’s parents for clarification; and as a result of the second interview with them, Stevenson came up with different information. With two sets of information, only the later of which Stevenson claimed to accept, Stevenson went to Khriby to investigate the supposed past life of the boy. There he found a deceased person named Ibrahim Bouhamzy that he ultimately settled on as Imad Elawar’s previous incarnation. Given the multiple stories told by the parents, it seems that the initial claims to be discovered were at best unclear. The tabulation used by Stevenson in this case also leaves many questions unanswered. For instance, to say “His name was Bouhamzy and he lived in the city of

Khriby" (Stevenson, 1966/1974, p. 287) leaves out the person's firstname. Originally, the parents thought that their child's past life was that of Mahmoud Bouhamzy. The selection is suspicious. The name "Mahmoud" is merely glossed as "name mentioned by Imad"(1966/1974,p.287), but this leaves out the context in which Imad mentioned the name. If only one knew in what context Imad had mentioned the name! Similarly, Stevenson recorded the accident claim by saying "A truck ran over a man"(1966/1974,p. 291) without mentioning whether the boy thought that his previous incarnation had been run over by the truck. This, too, suggests (though it doesn't confirm) after-the-fact selection of information. Whether any set of claims by a young boy has a good chance of being matched in some nearby town is still decidedly unclear. Julio Siquera (2004) reviewed the Imad Elawar case trying to figure out how convincing the correspondences between the material Stevenson wrote down before travelling to Khri by were with the subsequent tabulation material. On the dual information received by Stevenson, he writes: "I must say that, being myself a father (I have a daughter, 14 years old, and a son, 8 years old),I do not believe the possibility that are searcher can safely identify what is (or was) the child's statements and what is (or was) the 'entangling of it' with its immediate surrounding (mainly, but not only, with parents' interpretations, positive or negative feedbacks, etc)" (2004). If Siquera is right, then the best first approach is to do an experiment using the X and Y cases of the sort indicated in section 1 above to see if extant resemblances between coliving people do not seem to need special explanations, whereas the cases of supposed past-life memories do seem to require such explanations. If there is little difference between them, then what the supposed rebirth memories seem to require is not require data.

3.CONCLUSION

In short, Stevenson's elaborate anecdotal research lacks experimental confirmation (including controlled experimental confirmation), might not be required at all, and is full of serious errors, flaws, gaps, messes, and difficulties. It does not correspond to the sort of work required in courses on research methods given to third-or fourth-year college students. And we can generalize from this, too, as was hinted at the end of section 1. First, if one wants to do empirical anecdotal research, one should do adequate controlled experimental research beforehand. Second, one must find through that controlled experimental research that the probability expectations are broken in a direction favorable to a paranormal explanation, including reincarnation or rebirth. Third, if one finds such a direction, one can go on to do, or interpret existing, anecdotal research; but one must do or interpret such research well, without major errors or confusions along the way. In general, the first sort of research was not done at all; consequently, the second sort of result could not have been found; and judging from Stevenson's work, the third process (regardless of the absence of the other two) has been inadequate. One might well expect the work of the "top rebirth scientist" to be equal to, or better than, typical empirical research; but there are three big ways in which the empirical research into reincarnation or rebirth has, so far, failed.

Jean Paul-Satre – Being and Nothingnes

Generally speaking there is no irreducible taste or inclination. They all represent a certain appropriative choice of being. It is up to existential psychoanalysis to compare and classify them. Ontology abandons us here; it has merely enabled us to determine the ultimate ends of human

reality, its fundamental possibilities, and the value which haunts it. Each human reality is at the same time a direct project to metamorphose its own For-itself into an In-itself-For-itself and a project of the appropriation of the world as a totality of being-in-itself, in the form of a fundamental quality. Every human reality is a passion in that it projects losing itself so as to found being and by the same stroke to constitute the Initself which escapes contingency by being its own foundation, the Enscausa sui, which religions call God. Thus the passion of man is the reverse of that of Christ, for man loses himself as man in order that God may be born. But the idea of God is contradictory and we lose ourselves in vain. Man is a useless passion.

Max Stiner – The Ego and is Own

The Christian is no longer to care for family, State, etc., as existences; Christians are not to sacrifice themselves for these "divine things" like the ancients, but these are only to be utilized to make the spirit alive in them. The real family has become indifferent, and there is to arise out of it an ideal one which would then be the "truly real," a sacred family, blessed by God, or, according to the liberal way of thinking, a "rational" family. With the ancients, family, State, fatherland, is divine as a thing extant; with the moderns it is still awaiting divinity, as extant it is only sinful, earthly, and has still to be "redeemed," i. e., to become truly real. This has the following meaning: The family, etc., is not the extant and real, but the divine, the idea, is extant and real; whether this family will make itself real by taking up the truly real, the idea, is still unsettled. It is not the individual's task to serve the family as the divine, but, reversely, to serve the divine and to bring to it the still undivine family, to subject everything in the idea's name, to set up the idea's banner everywhere, to bring the idea to real efficacy.

But, since the concern of Christianity, as of antiquity, is for the divine, they always come out at this again on their opposite ways. At the end of heathenism the divine becomes the extramundane, at the end of Christianity the intramundane. Antiquity does not succeed in putting it entirely outside the world, and, when Christianity accomplishes this task, the divine instantly longs to get back into the world and wants to "redeem" the world. But within Christianity it does not and cannot come to this, that the divine as intramundane should really become the mundane itself: there is enough left that does and must maintain itself unpenetrated as the "bad," irrational, accidental, "egoistic," the "mundane" in the bad sense. Christianity begins with God's becoming man, and carries on its work of conversion and redemption through all time in order to prepare for God a reception in all men and in everything human, and to penetrate everything with the spirit: it sticks to preparing a place for the "spirit."

When the accent was at last laid on Man or mankind, it was again the idea that they "pronounced eternal." "Man does not die!" They thought they had now found the reality of the idea: Man is the I of history, of the world's history; it is he, this ideal, that really develops, i.e. realizes, himself. He is the really real and corporeal one, for history is his body, in which individuals are only members. Christ is the I of the world's history, even of the pre-Christian; in modern apprehension it is man, the figure of Christ has developed into the figure of man: man as such, man absolutely, is the "central point" of history. In "man" the imaginary beginning returns again; for "man" is as imaginary as Christ is. "Man," as the I of the world's history, closes the cycle of Christian apprehensions.

Christianity's magic circle would be broken if the strained relation between existence and calling, e.g., between me as I am and me as I should be, ceased; it persists only as the longing of the idea for its bodiliness, and vanishes with the relaxing separation of the two: only when the idea remains — idea, as man or mankind is indeed a bodiless idea, is Christianity still extant. The corporeal idea, the corporeal or "completed" spirit, floats before the Christian as "the end of the days" or as the "goal of history"; it is not present time to him.

The individual can only have a part in the founding of the Kingdom of God, or, according to the modern notion of the same thing, in the development and history of humanity; and only so far as he has a part in it does a Christian, or according to the modern expression human, value pertain to him; for the rest he is dust and a worm-bag. That the individual is of himself a world's history, and possesses his property in the rest of the world's history, goes beyond what is Christian. To the Christian the world's history is the higher thing, because it is the history of Christ or "man"; to the egoist only his history has value, because he wants to develop only himself not the mankind-idea, not God's plan, not the purposes of Providence, not liberty, etc. He does not look upon himself as a tool of the idea or a vessel of God, he recognizes no calling, he does not fancy that he exists for the further development of mankind and that he must contribute his mite to it, but he lives himself out, careless of how well or ill humanity may fare thereby. If it were not open to confusion with the idea that a state of nature is to be praised, one might recall Lenau's "Three Gypsies."- What, am I in the world to realize ideas? To do my part by my citizenship, say, toward the realization of the idea "State," or by marriage, as husband and father, to bring the idea of the family into an existence? What does such a calling concern me! I live after a calling as little as the flower grows and gives fragrance after a calling.

The ideal "Man" is realized when the Christian apprehension turns about and becomes the proposition, "I, this unique one, am man." The conceptual question, "what is man?" — has then changed into the personal question, "who is man?" With "what" the concept was sought for, in order to realize it; with "who" it is no longer any question at all, but the answer is personally on hand at once in the asker: the question answers itself.

They say of God, "Names name thee not." That holds good of me: no concept expresses me, nothing that is designated as my essence exhausts me; they are only names. Likewise they say of God that he is perfect and has no calling to strive after perfection. That too holds good of me alone.

I am owner of my might, and I am so when I know myself as unique. In the unique one the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, of which he is born. Every higher essence above me, be it God, be it man, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness, and pales only before the sun of this consciousness. If I concern myself for myself,[Stell' Ich auf Mich meine Sache. Literally, "if I set my affair on myself"] the unique one, then my concern rests on its transitory, mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say:

All things are nothing to me.

What is an Atheist? By Sylvain Maréchal (1799, one of the very few atheist and anarchist literature during the French Revolution)

There was not always a God. There was a time when a man, living with his family, knew no other authority than that of his father. He had few needs because he had few desires. He wasn't a brute, a barbarian, or an eater of men, as we have been led to believe. Nor was he a polished and false city-dweller, vain and servile: he was a man in all his plenitude, ignorant of the art of writing, perhaps even that of speaking, but knowing how to live; that is, he loved his father, his wife and his children. He worked for them, with them and died in their embrace. In his eyes his fields were the entire universe. Regulating his occupations by the sun's movements and the earth's fecundity, his arms and his heart comprised his entire fortune and pleasure. Suspecting nothing beneath the vegetal layer of the soil he cultivated, man of that time was a stranger to sciences and vices, to social virtues and crimes, but was entirely given over to nature, to innocence.

Travelers have found a few faint traces of the golden age: it is not a chimera. Poets have rendered its existence doubtful by loading it with factitious ornaments, but that happy age once shone.

Why should we feel any repugnance about believing such things? Are they in the realm of the possible? Is it so difficult to live in this way? And isn't the current existence of humankind even more astonishing?

At that time man, limited to the surface of heaven and earth, neither had nor could he have had any idea of any power other than that which put him on earth and raised him. Do we think about something we have no need of? And what need do we have of a God when we have a father, a wife, children, a friend, arms, eyes and a heart?

But a true atheist is the man of the golden age. The atheist is he who, retreating into himself and freeing himself from the ties he has been forced to contract, or that were made unbeknownst to him, retreats from civilization to that former state of humanity and, in the forum of his conscience, laying low all prejudices of every color, approaches as nearly as possible that fortunate time when there was no suspicion of the divine existence, where all was well, where we contented ourselves strictly with family obligations. The atheist is the man of nature.

Nevertheless, placed today in a more complicated and narrow sphere he fulfills his obligations as a citizen and resigns himself to the decrees of necessity. While groaning about the vicious bases of political institutions, while striking with contempt those who so poorly organize them, he submits to the public order of the place he lives. But we don't find him becoming chief of a party or of opinion. We never meet him on the banal road that leads to useful or brilliant posts. Consistent with his principles, he lives among his corrupted or corrupting contemporaries like the voyager who, having to traverse muddy beaches, protects himself from the venom of reptiles. He gets off with only being deafened by their insults. He goes his way among these evil beings without taking on their tortuous and servile allure.

The true atheist is thus not the sybarite who, taking himself for an epicurean when he is nothing but a debauchee, doesn't fear to say deep in his worn-out heart: "There is no God, thus there is nor morality, so I can permit myself everything."

The true atheist is not the statesman who, knowing that the divine chimera was imagined to frighten the men of the people, commands them in the name of a God he has no use of.

The true atheist cannot be found among those hypocritical and bloody heroes who, in order to open a path to conquest, announce themselves as the protectors of the cult they profess to the nations they propose to tame, and who when among their families amuse themselves on the subject of human credulity.

The true atheist is not that vile man who, condemned for many years for his indelible character as a sacerdotal imposter, changes his habit and opinions when this infamous métier ceases to be lucrative and impudently ranges himself among the sages he persecuted.

The true atheist is not that hot-head who goes around the crossroads smashing all the religious signs he meets and preaches the cult of reason to a plebe graced only with instinct.

The true atheist is not one of those men of the world, or men comme il faut who, through snobbery, disdain the use of thought and more or less live like the horse they mount, or the women they keep.

Nor is the true atheist seated in the chairs of those scientific societies whose members ceaselessly lie to their consciences and agree to hide their thoughts and to inhibit the solemn march of philosophy in order to advance their miserable personal interests or for pitiful political considerations.

The true atheist is not the proud semi-savant who wants there to be no other atheist than himself in the world, and who would cease to be one if most people became so. For him the mania for standing out in the crowd takes the place of a philosophy. Self-love is his God. If he could he'd see to it that enlightenment belonged only to him; to hear him speak, the rest of humanity is not worthy of it.

Nor is the true atheist that timorous philosopher lacking in energy who blushes about his opinion as if it were an evil thought. A cowardly friend of truth he would sooner compromise it than compromise himself. We see him haunting temples in order to cast aside any suspicion of impiety. An egoist who carries circumspection to the point of pusillanimity, he always finds the time to be premature for the extirpation of the most ancient prejudices. He doesn't fear God, but men frighten him. It makes no difference to him that they destroy each other in civil and religious wars, as long as he lives sheltered from harm and in peace.

Nor is the true atheist that systematic physician who only rejects God in order to have the glory of fabricating the world at his leisure, with no other assistance than that of his imagination.

The true atheist is not he who says: "No, I don't want a God." Rather it is he who says: "I can be wise without a God."

The true atheist doesn't reason with great argumentative skill against divine existence. On the contrary, the weakest theologians could embarrass him if he crossed swords with them. But he could say to them with bonhomie and to close the discussion:

"Doctors, is there a God in heaven? For me that question is no more important than this one: Are there animals on the moon? Here is my motto, in one line, doctors:

'I have no more need of a God than he of me.'

– Sylvain, the French Lucretius

“What difference does a God make to me? My thoughts go no further than that which strikes my senses and I don’t push my curiosity so far as to want to find in the heavens yet another master: I already meet enough of them on earth. Believing that there is something beyond the all of which I am a part is repugnant to my reason. But if this object were to exist he would be perfectly foreign to me. What is the relationship between us? Enclosed within the limits of the universe in which I live, that which happens among my neighbors is no concern of mine. It is not my affair. The doorway to my house is for me the columns of Hercules. There is quite a distance between man and what we call a God. I am too near-sighted to see that far. It is difficult to get along at such a great distance. In any event, I have everything I need right at hand: rights to exercise, duties to fulfill, and pleasures, the results of my duties and rights. The heart’s most tender affections and the sweetest illusions of the sprit find around me, in me, and at every instant of my life, nourishment taken from the nature of things. I don’t have a moment to waste. Every season of my existence offers me varied subjects for contentment. Newborn I have my mother’s breast; a young man I throw myself into the arms of another me. In my old age my children render me the care they received from me.

“Surrounded, embraced by my parents, my wife, my children, my friend, where is there room for God? He has no place in a united family. We don’t at all feel the necessity. A good son, a good husband, a good father lacks for nothing.

“If I meet with no reward I go down into the depths of my heart, close myself in and find there ample recompense for the pains I suffer outside, for the losses I feel at my side, for injustices, for the persecutions of the wicked, who are more to be pitied than I.

“I know how to find all I need within myself, without any effort. All my means are at my disposal. I envelop myself in the memory of my good works and rely on my conscience without begging for help above my head, in the clouds.

“Doctors, if your God exists or not you can see that man, if he knows to question himself and knows how to appreciate his personal and internal resources, has no need to go outside of himself to taste happiness, the fruit of his virtue. The happiness of honest men is always their own work. They owe nothing to anyone.

“Doctors, keep your God. I can do without him.”

Some good souls take pity on atheists: “The unfortunates (they say). They cannot be well either in this world or the next. Hope, this balm of life, has been taken from them. They have a narrow sprit, a dry soul. They don’t know how to love, the unfortunates!”

The heart that didn’t love was the first Atheist. – L. Mercier

Good people! Don’t fret about the lot of atheists. They don’t in the least envy your enjoyments. They have their own that are more real and purer. Not worrying about the past that is no longer, or the future, which is not yet, limited to the present, which alone belongs to them, their interest is in

the best possible use of their time. They take their rule of conduct from nature, which knows no lacunae and is never wrong.

Good people, don't fret on their account. Good, true atheists are more dependable lovers, spouses, and friends than other men. They feel and they enjoy with more energy. Present life being all for them they work at getting the most advantage from it. And experience has taught them that that they can't abuse it without first harming themselves.

"Certainly, but leave us our God!"

Good people, what do you want with him? What good is he to you? From what evils does he preserve you? After having left you under royal despotism for twelve centuries was your almighty God able to defend you from anarchy? If your God mixes in your affairs why do they go so poorly? Why do you have altars and no morals? Why so many priests and so few honest men? If your almighty God contents himself on high in a perfect neutrality, then tell me, good people here below, is it not then as if you have no God? Are atheists so wrong, are they so criminal when they see to their own salvation? Keep your God, but don't find it evil if atheists don't needlessly multiply beings. And above all, rid yourselves of all unjust prejudices in their regard.

Atheists, who they once used to frighten, and still today frighten women and big and small children with, are the best people in the world. They don't form a corporation, like priests; they don't make propaganda. In fact, they don't offend anyone.

The repertoire of ancient and modern atheists will at last prove that most of them are, of all men, the most tolerant, the most peaceful, the most enlightened, and the most loving. They are also the happiest.

Compare the character and the habits of the man without God to the habits and character of the man of God. Is there a more perfect contrast?

Observe the latter: he continuously lives in fear and humiliation, like a slave kissing the whip that strikes him.

If he carries out a good act, instead of giving himself over to a legitimate pride he is foolish enough to attribute all the merit, all the honor to a master who dictated it to him. If he proposes a generous resolution he demands the grace and the permission to accomplish it. A weak child, he doesn't dare put a foot in front of the other without looking over at papa God (forgive us the familiarity of the expression, but it is perfectly accurate). Look at how the deist, the theist, the religious man of any sect lowers his head, closes his eyes, joins his hands, extends his arms, bends the knee when he pronounces the word "God." Are there any terms more abject or more foolish than those he uses in his invocations? If he loses his wife or children he thanks his divine creator, for nothing happens without his orders, and it's always for the best. On his deathbed, like a criminal, he trembles at the approach of the supreme judge. The idea of a generous or vengeful God prevents him from giving himself over to nature's final effusions. He coldly casts his family and friends aside in order to prepare himself to appear before the celestial tribunal. Of course such an existence is a perpetual torture and realizes in this life the hell of the other world.

The man without God has and maintains a completely different attitude.

Let us follow him on one of the days of his life. He leaves his wife's arms or wakes up to order to view the rise of the great star, and then he sets in order his household affairs and his labors. After having given his children their first lessons he takes the morning meal with his family. Afterwards, each works at his own occupations and commitments. They get together again at midday I order to recuperate the strength worn out by their labors and to gaily prepare themselves for new fatigues. Exercising his natural and acquired faculties the man without God doesn't know boredom. Every hour procures for him an observation to be made, a service to be rendered. An indispensable part of nature, and as active as it, he coordinates himself with it so as to fulfill the duties imposed on him by his relations with others. The evening come, he passes peaceful moments in the midst of his family, with a friend, and allows himself to relax, the well-earned salary of a productive and useful day. Gentle rest awaits him during the night. He falls asleep, satisfied that he left no void in his day, modeled on the sun's path.

And when he reaches the term of his existence? He gathers all his strength in order to enjoy the pleasures that remain to him and then closes his eyes forever, but with the certainty of leaving an honorable and cherished memory in the hearts of his kin, from whom he receives the final testimonies of esteem and attachment. His role finished, he peacefully retires from the scene in order to make room for other actors who will take him as their model. He doubtless feels lively regret for the separation from all he loved, but reason tells him that such is the immutable order of things. In any event, he knows that he doesn't entirely die. A father is eternal. He is reborn, he lives again in each of his children, and even in pieces of his body: nothing of him is obliterated. An indestructible link in the great chain of beings, the man without God embraces everything in thought and finds consolation in this, knowing that passing away is nothing but a displacement of matter and a change in form. At the moment he leaves life remembers, if he has the time, the good he did, as well as his faults. Proud of his existence, he has only bended his knee before the author of his days. He has walked on the earth, his head high and with a firm step, the equal of every other being and only owing accounts to his conscience. His life is as full as nature: Ecce Vir.

If the narrow framework in which we are circumscribed allowed us to profit from all the advantages of our subject, we would teach certain people that atheists are trustworthy in commerce, gentle and calm in society, that they alone know how to enjoy with delicacy and in keeping with nature's wishes, which they consult before anything else. Among them it is rare to meet fanatics or hypochondriacs. Happy and content, they are easy to get along with because, knowing how short life is, they prefer to pass it loving each other rather than in disputes or hatred. This is why they don't see anything wrong in thinking differently from them. Philosophers without any pretensions, they aren't angered by insults, even those habitually cast at them by men of God. They look upon them as ill-bred children.

If some of the atheists who names are gathered in the "Dictionary" were to return to the world what would we not do to be admitted to their company, to share their easy and remorse-free happiness? Who among us would regret his day if he had passed the first hours of it in the school of Pythagoras or Aristotle, then accepted Anacreon's, Luctreius' or Chaulieu's hospitality. And

then, after having strolled in Epicurus' or Helvetius' garden allows himself to be surprised by the night between Aspasian and Ninon.

Without any consideration for these illustrious names, they say to us:

"Nothing less than a God, or the idea of a God, is needed to fill the void in man's heart, to occupy his thoughts. He who doesn't believe is necessarily more ambitious, more boisterous. It's only by achieving honors or material pleasures that he can get by and exist on earth without disgust."

Let us answer this.

He who is an atheist through reason feels more than others the worthlessness of these social distinctions, these vulgar pleasures that most men are so vain and jealous of. A careful observer, an enlightened friend of nature, he needs great objects to feed his imagination. He looks with pity and affliction on those political or religious crises that torment the mass of men for the profit of a handful of wretches whose entire talent lies in the audacity of crime. These are nothing but atrocious and shameful spectacles in which the atheist refuses to play a role.

Sometimes vengeance is taken for his disdain by covering him in insults. It is here that we can admire the influence of liberal opinion on the character and existence of man. The atheist who has come to think in this way by studying the nature of things has necessarily placed himself above them. Filled with his own dignity he submits his reason to no other authority than that of evidence. Atheism inspires sentiments of elevation and independence to a degree unattainable in any other system.

"A God is necessary for the people. The people need one to learn to be docile before their leaders. And these leaders can't do without one in order to ease their tasks of administration."

We answer: God is useful to neither those who are governed nor those who govern. For many years he has made no impression on the spirit of the former. The people aren't so stupid as not to see that God is nothing but a brake used by those who tyrannize them. Daily experience has rudely awakened them to the truth of this.

In any event, in a population of 100,000, there are perhaps not fifty who have taken the trouble to reason out their beliefs. The people accept them without question. They are Catholic, just as they'd be atheist, if their ancestors had been so. God resembles those old articles of furniture which, far from being useful, are only in the way but which are passed on in families and are religiously kept, because the son received it from the father, and the father from his ancestor.

We insist and we say: a God and his priests are as necessary as a police magistrate and his spies.

Whatever the perversity of men in civilization a good correctional tribunal suffices for all causes. Dual employments harm each other, paralyze each other reciprocally. The counter-police of priests is never as good as the active surveillance of spies.

It is at long last time to smash these old politico-religious gears that everyone agrees are insufficient and so little favorable to human perfectibility.

But here is the most atrocious and most gratuitous of imputations against men without God:

Atheism (they dare to say) demoralizes civil society.

“Holy choler of virtue, guide my pen a moment...”

Priests of a God fruit of adultery you dare say to us that atheism demoralizes!...

And you, theist adorers of an all-powerful providence that has permitted the bloody immoralities of a ten-year long revolution, you too say that atheism demoralizes!

And you too, statesmen, you permit yourselves to become the complacent echoes of priests and you say along with them: “Atheism demoralizes the people.” You who every day allow conjugal faith to be ridiculed on all the stages of the land; you who lay a trap for the unfortunate with your lotteries ... This is what truly demoralizes the people. A people loses its morality with priests who sanctify adultery in their liturgy, with semi-philosophers who preach a providence complicit in the crimes he permits ...

Thinkers who are either inconsistent or in bad faith: was it atheism that reigned at the court of our last three monarchical masters, Louis XIV, Louis XV, and Louis XVI?

Was it atheism that dominated the Convention, with Robespierre the persecutor of atheists?

Was it atheism that founded the Inquisition; that covered America with corpses, that ordered the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, and which, in the Vendee, commits all kinds of crimes?

Is it a coalition of atheists, that of the crowned powers that carries the plague of a war of extermination all over Europe?

Were St. Dominic, Charles IX, and Maria de Medicis atheists? Were Ferdinand, George III, Francois II, and Paul I atheists? Was the mother of the latter an atheist? Are Pitt and Maury? Are the French émigrés who turn their swords against their mothers’ breasts?

Studious Bayle! Virtuous Spinoza! Wise Freret! Modest Dumarsais! Honest Helvetius! Sensible Holbach! Etc. All of you philosophers who only rejected God so as to bring forth an unalloyed morality! You demoralized the world?

Is the atheist to be looked upon like the scapegoat who the Hebrews charged with all their iniquities?

It is for the amusement of idlers and the education of fools that the coryphées of bas empire of French literature enjoy themselves in both prose and verse at the expense of the atheism of those who profess it.

We will only reply to them by burying them in the imposing names and the authority of those in the “Dictionary.” These praise-worthy names should at least make them more circumspect. A moral opinion professed by so many great and good men deserves to be spoken of in more measured tones. This mass of suffrages should carry some weight in the scale of the undecided.

We have gathered not only the principal sentiments of known atheists, but also an infinite number of testimonies in their favor. Testimonies worthy of even more credence because they come from the mouths or pens of their adversaries.

We have surprised several theologians stating maxims much more philosophical than they had thought, rendering homage to the purity of conduct and intention of men without God.

It should also be said that many honest citizens and learned men are atheists without believing that they are so. This is because they haven't yet learned to draw the consequences of and apply certain principles that they profess.

Let us add that if there had never been rogues or unfortunates on earth we would never have thought to look for a God in the heavens.

Our descendants will not be able to read certain pages of our annals without asking: were men differently organized than us in those times? What did they do with their reason? What a pity that they placed so much importance on pronouncing the word God!

Regeneration is spoken of, a new order. Great principles are announced, vast plans, and profound insights. Ideologues treat their predecessors as idiots, as shortsighted. And yet these men with their daring concepts don't dare officially publish anything against the most absurd and decrepit of prejudices. They propose the raising of an edifice of the most sublime proportions, yet they seem to respect the Gothic ruins that they fear to deliver a decisive blow to. They allow humanity to remain prostrated at the feet of its ancient fetish instead of saying to it, with all the authority of reason: "Rise up and march with giant steps towards happiness." Following the timid counsels of a false policy they accord public asylum to both sacerdotal imposture and philosophy. Statesmen would be mortified if we thought them religious, but it doesn't bother them that everyone except them be so.

They say: "It is not yet time to take God from the people."

What are you waiting for? Fear the results of semi-enlightenment. Everything must be told the people, or nothing. A people only half enlightened is the most detestable of peoples. You will never make anything of them. But this is perhaps your intention. If all nations have unanimously recognized a God distinct from matter, and dedicated a cult to him, the wise men of all centuries and all countries have only recognized matter working on its own.

Going over our nomenclature we can see these two extremes touch. We see the theologian and the philosopher walk in opposite directions in order to arrive at the same goal. The spiritualist and the materialist draw similar results from their opposing arguments. God is nature to the eyes of the body; nature is God to the eyes of understanding. Matter or abstraction, the divinity is all or it is nothing. And those who speak of it are either Spinozists or Don Quixotes.

It is to be hoped that the reading of the "Dictionary of Ancient and Modern Atheists" will lead its readers to say:

"Why spill so much ink, bile and blood? God can have his moment of utility during the childhood of political bodies. Now that humanity has reached maturity we no longer need that old leash. Freed, we will know how to reduce to their just value those brilliant, vehement speeches. The useful, the good, the true will obtain preference in our spirits over the superb flights of imagination and vanity. Agitated men who meditate coups d'état, deep thinkers who want to carry out

revolutions in the empire of ideas, or apply their sublime theories to statistics, will meet sensible men along the way, walking with nature and reason, imperturbable enemies of both political and religious abstractions. With religion, simplified and reduced to filial piety, we will also want to simplify our civil institutions. The entire diplomatic apparatus will appear to us as a gigantic piece of childishness. All of those numerous gears of social government, which resemble ancient hydraulic machines will be reduced to less complicated movements. We will act in a fashion contrary to our superstitious ancestors, who made little of much. Rid as we will then be of all the petty considerations that were necessary up till now in order not to bump up against venerable and ancient errors, we will say, parodying an expression of Ninon's: 'A government must be quite poor in enlightenment and resources when it thinks it has to come to terms with religious prejudices.'"

Such will be the revolution carried out by atheism. Such, we repeat, will be the influence of that liberal opinion on spirits and institutions. The full and complete destruction of a long and imposing error that mixed in with everything, that denatured everything, even virtue; that was a trap or the weak, a lever for the powerful, and a barrier before men of genius. The destruction of that long and imposing error will change the face of the world.

While waiting for this great event, which is so feared by those who live on lies, and which the sterile vows of the wise call for but can't hasten, we say to our perplexed contemporaries:

"God has for him ignorance and imposture, fear and despotism, and against him reason and philosophy, the study of nature and the love of independence. God owes his birth to misunderstanding. He only exists through the charm of words: the knowledge of things kills and obliterates him. Good sense rejects the idea of a corporeal God. An abstract God has no hold on it. And yet God can only be abstraction or matter. It must again be repeated here: God is all or nothing. In order to get along and to be understood, the theologian has to express himself like the philosopher. But if everything is God, then God loses his divinity. On the other hand, ceding to his spirituality, he only exists in the thought of man. We can understand the embarrassment of the schools, constructing on imaginary spaces and with words that have no meaning, or who destroy the ghost when they do. Alas, all the sacred wars that bloody the pages of history are then nothing but grammatical quarrels. Blush for your fathers, who lost themselves in miserable theological questions. Burn those dusty libraries that only attest to the delirium and shame of the human spirit. Life's brevity doesn't leave you enough leisure to waste your fleeting moments in gratuitous conjectures or suppositions.

"Up till the present you have only lived on fictions. Your very laws are still full of them. Man needs something more substantial. Leave aside all that doesn't rest on nature and the evidence of things.

"A modern legislator (Porcher) dared to say, in a moment of openness: 'Opium should be administered to three quarters of men.'

"May this statement dissipate your long sleep. It is only too true: up till today men have only been governed by administering them religious and other soporifics. From here on in, close your ears not only to priests, but also to any statesman who speaks and acts like a priest.

“Three talismanic words were enough to make religions and revolutions. This must no longer occur. You must no longer present – or at least suffer – such spectacles and scandals. Reject all these systems that are the cause or the result of them. Has not everything already been said on the subject of divine science and politics? Pass now to positive objects that truly touch you. Do you not have domestic morality and traditional experience.

“Two books are open to you, your hearts and nature. Think on them above all else. Think about how any other kind of study is petty and pitiful, wasteful and uncertain compared to that of the heart and nature. Only they are real and useful, good and beautiful. Give yourselves over to the results of observation and experience, and to the sweetness of the sentiments of reciprocal benevolence. Place all that has been said and done about God and diplomacy in parallel with the labors of agriculture and family duties. How pitiful and wretched is the profound metaphysician who passes his time in his dusty study in order to make books with other books, compared to the atheist exercising his intellectual and physical faculties under nature’s eye and enjoying the purest pleasures, the result of a healthy organization. How thin and ridiculous is the grave publicist next to the laborer, head of a family and having the good sense to be nothing but that, and who relies on the light of his good sense! It is to this that man must sooner or later return.

“Leave God aside. God is of no use to you...God is of no use to man.

“Learn from your fathers’ errors. Don’t, like them, sacrifice things to words. Look after your own affairs. Keep an eye on those among you charged with taking care of your external interests. Your agents aren’t bothered that the crowd keeps its gaze raised to heaven. While it is looking there, it doesn’t see what is going on on earth”

The idea of a God making up in another world for the tyrannies put up with in this one, imprinted on the brain of the ruled, is a comfortable pillow for the head of the rulers.

A republic of atheists would give its supreme administrators less latitude. Atheists are clear-sighted and honest citizens and absolutely refuse to recognize any other power than that of reason. Men like these can’t be led with sticks. One fears encountering them. Beautiful exteriors don’t impress them; beautiful promises don’t satisfy them. It’s not to them that we can say: “Be patient, let the evil ones do as they please. God allows them to reach the heights for a moment in order to prepare a greater fall.” Atheists don’t accept these reasonings. They want to prevent evil; they want justice to be done to the first place holder who does wrong. They want the law, present everywhere at the same time and as prompt as lightning, to replace a hidden and slow-moving God, who allows Cromwell and Monk to die in their beds.

Tolerant by taste and principle, atheists want the magistrate of a great nation, by consecrating a law on the freedom of religion, to nevertheless make felt the absurdity and the inconvenience of all religions in his wise proclamations addressed to fathers and heads of families.

“Citizens! (he could say to them) the freedom of religion is demanded, and we won’t refuse it. But is it something good for those who so loudly call for it? We don’t think so, and we think it is our obligation to share our doubts with you. We can’t forbid the sale of arsenic by pharmacists. But fathers and heads of family, we ask you in the name of good morals and holy truth, in the name of

public and private interest, to join your nature to the enlightenment given by all those who were truly wise and preserve the rising generation from the religious contagion.

“Make your children and your dependents feel that they are being fooled, that they owe nothing to a being high above their understanding; that their sole duties are the love of labor and the laws, the recognition of the authors of their days and their instruction. Fathers and heads of family! Accustom your children and your servants to only see in you ministers of morality; to see as their only altars the places where they received life and education, to only confess their faults to you, to only consult you. Finally, to find in you and you alone their God and their priests.

“Heads of family! Reclaim your rights. The only brake a free people requires is laws and morals.

“Good mothers! Be your children’s providence. May your daughters virtues be your work. Don’t join strangers to your august functions. A well-born daughter should never leave her mother for an instant. It is indecent to see a young virgin kneel at the feet of a man who is not her father to confess to him her domestics errors. There is a universal religion that is previous to all the others and that will survive them: filial piety. This is the only natural religion. The paternal household is its temple...”

But such means are slow. Entering into agreement with falsehood, attacking it only with proclamations, promises a victory for truth in a few centuries. I like to think that one day, perhaps soon, a pure man will rise, joining to the sparkle of his intelligence, to the ascendant of his virtues all the strength of a great character.

For many centuries almost all countries have been dissatisfied with their condition. They call on a supernatural being who must come to earth in order to change, or at least ameliorate, the state of things.

At Delphi they prophesied the coming of a son of Apollo who would bring the reign of justice to man.

The Romans waited for a king predicted by their Sybils. The Indians wait for Vishnu, who will appear to them in the form of a centaur. The Persians wait for Ali, the Chinese for Felo. The Japanese wait for Pe’irum and Karbadoxi, and the Siamese for Sammonocodon. The Hebrews think yet about their Messiah. The Christians believe in a second visit from Jesus, in the fearful guise of a severe judge from whom there is no appeal.

The moralists, the philosophers themselves, hope for the appearance of a man daring to openly speak the whole truth.

May he be proclaimed the benefactor of humanity, the wise legislator who will find the secret of erasing from man’s brains the word “God,” sinister talisman that has caused so many crimes and so much evil!

What is an atheist?

The true atheist is a modest and peaceful philosopher who doesn’t like to make noise and who doesn’t show off his principles with a puerile ostentation, atheism being of all things in the world the most natural, the most simple.

Without arguing either for or against divine existence, the atheist goes straight to his goal and does for it what others do for their God. It isn’t so as to please the divinity that he practices virtue, but in order to be right with himself.

Too proud to obey anyone, even a God, the atheist takes orders only from his conscience.

The atheist has a treasure to guard, and that’s his honor. A man who respects himself knows what he must forbid pr permit himself and would blush at the idea of taking advice or following a model.

The atheist is an honorable man. He would be ashamed to owe to a God a good work he can do for himself and in his own name. He doesn’t like to be pushed to do good, or turned away from evil: he seeks the one and avoids the other of his own will, and we can depend upon him.

How many good acts have been attributed to God that had as their only principle the heart of the great man who produced them?

The most perfect disinterest is the basis for all the resolutions of the atheist. He knows he has rights and obligations. He exercises the first without complaint, and the others without constraint. Order and justice are his divinities, and he makes free sacrifices only to them:

“The wise man alone has the right to be an atheist.”

Friedrich Nietzce (Various Quotes)

New battles. -After Buddha was dead, they still showed his shadow in a cave for centuries - a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way people are, there may still for millennia be caves in which they show his shadow. - And we - we must still def eat his shadow as well!

The madman. - Haven't you heard of that madman who in the bright morning lit a lantern and ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, 'I'm looking for God! l'm looking for God!' Since many of those who did not believe in God were standing around together just then, he caused great laughter. Has he been lost, then? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone to sea? Emigrated? - Thus they shouted and laughed, one interrupting the other. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tel1 you! We have killed him - you and I! We are all his murderers. But how did we do this? How were wc able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the spange to wipe away the entire horizon? What were wc doing when wc unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are wc moving to? Away from all suns? Are wc not continually falling? And backwards, sidewards, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down? Aren't wc straying as though through an infinite nothing? Isn't empty space breathing at us? Hasn't it got colder? Isn't night and more night coming again and again? Don't lanterns have to be lit in the morning? Do wc still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do wc

still smell nothing of the divine decomposition? - Gods, too, decompose! God is dead! God remains dead! And wc have killed him! How can wc console ourselves, the murderers of all murderersl The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could wc clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games will wc have to invent for ourselves? Is the magnitude of this deed not too great for us? Do wc not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it? There was never a greater deed - and whoever is horn af ter us will on account of this deed belong to a higher history than all history up to now!' Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; they too were silent and looked at him disconcertedly. Finally he threw his lantern on the ground so that it broke into pieces and went out. 'I come too early', he then said; 'my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder need time; the light of the stars needs time; deeds need time, even after they are done, in arder to be seen and heard. This deed is still more remote to them than the remotest stars - and yet they have done it themselves!' It is still recounted how on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there started singing his requiem aeternam deo. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but, 'What then are these churches now if not the tombs and sepulchers of God?'

How to understand our cheerfulness. - The greatest recent event – that 'God is dead'; that the belief in the Christian God has become unbelievable - is already starting to cast its first shadow over Europe. To those few at least whose eyes - or the suspicion in whose eyes is strong and subtle enough for this spectacle, some kind of sun seems to have set; some old deep trust turned into doubt: to them, our world must appear more autumnal, more mistrustful, stranger, 'alder'. But in the main one might say: for many people's power of comprehension, the event is itself far too great, distant, and out of the way even for its tidings to be thought of as having arrived yet. Even less may one suppose many to know at all what this event really means - and, now that this faith has been undermined, how much must collapse because it was built on this faith, leaned on it, had grown into it - for example, our entire European morality. This long, dense succession of demolition, destruction, downfall, upheaval that now stands ahead: who would guess enough of it today to play the teacher and herald of this monstrous logic of horror, the prophet of deep darkness and an eclipse of the sun the like of which has probably never befare existed on earth? Even we horn guessers of riddles who are so to speak on a lookout at the top of the mountain, posted between today and tomorrow and stretched in the contradiction between today and tomorrow, we firstlings and premature births of the next century, to whom the shadows that must soon envelop Europe really should have become apparent by now - why is it that even we look forward to this darkening without any genuine involvement and above all without worry and fear for ourselves? Are we perhaps still not too influenced by the most immediate consequences of this event - and these immediate consequences, the consequences for ourselves, are the opposite of what one might expect - not at all sad and gloomy, but much more like a new and barely describable type of light, happiness, relief, amusement, encouragement, dawn . . . Indeed, at hearing the news that 'the old god is dead', we philosophers and 'free spirits' feel illuminated by a new dawn; our heart overflows with gratitude, amazement, forebodings, expectation - finally the horizon seems clear again, even if not bright; finally our ships may set out again, set out to face any <langer; every daring of the

lover of knowledge is allowed again; the sea, our sea, lies open again; maybe there has never been such an 'open sea'.

With this I come to a conclusion and pronounce my judgment. I _condemn_ Christianity; I bring against the Christian church the most terrible of all the accusations that an accuser has ever had in his mouth. It is, to me, the greatest of all imaginable corruptions; it seeks to work the ultimate corruption, the worst possible corruption. The Christian church has left nothing untouched by its depravity; it has turned every value into worthlessness, and every truth into a lie, and every integrity into baseness of soul. Let any one dare to speak to me of its "humanitarian" blessings! Its deepest necessities range it against any effort to abolish distress; it lives by distress; it _creates_ distress to make _itself_ immortal.... For example, the worm of sin: it was the church that first enriched mankind with this misery!--The "equality of souls before God"--this fraud, this _pretext_ for the _rancunes_ of all the base-minded--this explosive concept, ending in revolution, the modern idea, and the notion of overthrowing the whole social order--this is _Christian_ dynamite.... The "humanitarian" blessings of Christianity forsooth! To breed out of _humanitas_ a self-contradiction, an art of self-pollution, a will to lie at any price, an aversion and contempt for all good and honest instincts! All this, to me, is the "humanitarianism" of Christianity!--Parasitism as the _only_ practice of the church; with its anaemic and "holy" ideals, sucking all the blood, all the love, all the hope out of life; the beyond as the will to deny all reality; the cross as the distinguishing mark of the most subterranean conspiracy ever heard of,--against health, beauty, well-being, intellect, _kindness_ of soul--_against life itself_.... This eternal accusation against Christianity I shall write upon all walls, wherever walls are to be found--I have letters that even the blind will be able to see.... I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means are venomous enough, or secret, subterranean and _small_ enough,--I call it the one immortal blemish upon the human race.... And mankind reckons _time_ from the _dies nefastus_ when this fatality befell from the first day of Christianity! Why not rather from its last? From today? The transvaluation of all values!...

Enquiry Concerning Political Justice by William Godwin

Of the Suppressions of Erroneous Opinions in Religion and Government

THE same views which have prevailed for the introduction of religious establishments have inevitably led to the idea of provisions against the rise and progress of heresy. No arguments can be adduced in favour of the political patronage of truth that will not be equally cogent in behalf of the political discouragement of error. Nay, they will, of the two, perhaps be most cogent in the latter case; as to prevent men from going wrong is a milder and more temperate assumption of power than to compel them to go right. It has however happened that this argument, though more tenable, has had fewer adherents. Men are more easily reconciled to abuse in the distribution of rewards, than in the infliction of penalties. It seems therefore the less necessary laboriously to insist upon the refutation of this principle; its discussion is principally requisite for the sake of method.

Various arguments have been alleged in defence of this restraint. 'The importance of opinion, as a general proposition, is notorious and unquestionable. Ought not political institution to take under

its inspection that root from which all our voluntary actions are ultimately derived? The opinions of men must be expected to be as various as their education and their temper: ought not government to exert its foresight, to prevent this discord from breaking out into anarchy and violence? There is no proposition so absurd, or so hostile to morality and public good, as not to have found its votaries: will there be no danger in suffering these eccentricities to proceed unmolested, and every perverter of truth and justice to make as many converts as he is able? It may be found indeed to be a hopeless task to endeavour to extirpate by the hand of power errors already established; but is it not the duty of government to prevent their ascendancy, to check the growth of their adherents, and the introduction of heresies hitherto unknown? Can those persons to whom the care of the general welfare is confided, or who are fitted, by their situation, or their talents, to suggest proper regulations to the adoption of the community, be justified in conniving at the spread of such extravagant and pernicious opinions as strike at the root of order and morality? Simplicity of mind, and an understanding undebauched with sophistry, have ever been the characteristics of a people among whom virtue has flourished: ought not government to exert itself, to exclude the inroad of qualities opposite to these? It is thus that the friends of moral justice have ever contemplated with horror the progress of infidelity and latitudinarian principles. It was thus that the elder Cato viewed with grief the importation into his own country of that plausible and loquacious philosophy by which Greece had already been corrupted.'

There are several trains of reflection which these reasoning suggest. None of them can be more important than that which may assist us in detecting the error of the elder Cato, and of other persons who have been the zealous, but mistaken, advocates of virtue. Ignorance is not necessary to render men virtuous. If it were, we might reasonably conclude that virtue was an imposture, and that it was our duty to free ourselves from its shackles. The cultivation of the understanding has no tendency to corrupt the heart. A man who should possess all the science of Newton, and all the genius of Shakespeare, would not, on that account, be a bad man. Want of great and comprehensive views had as considerable a share as benevolence in the grief of Cato. The progress of science and intellectual cultivation, in some degree, resembles the taking to pieces a disordered machine, with a purpose, by reconstructing it, of enhancing its value. An uninformed and timid spectator might be alarmed at the temerity of the artist, at the confused heap of pins and wheels that a-re laid aside at random, and might take it for granted that nothing but destruction could be the consequence. But he would be disappointed. It is thus that the extravagant sallies of mind are the prelude of the highest wisdom, and that the dreams of Ptolemy were destined to precede the discoveries of Newton.

The event cannot be other than favourable. Mind would else cease to be mind. It would be more plausible to say that the incessant cultivation of the understanding will terminate in madness than that it will terminate in vice. As long as enquiry is suffered to proceed, and science to improve, our knowledge is perpetually increased. Shall we know everything else, and nothing of ourselves? Shall we become clear-sighted and penetrating in all other subjects, without increasing our penetration upon the subject of man? Is vice most truly allied to wisdom, or to folly? Can mankind perpetually increase in wisdom, without increasing in the knowledge of what it is wise for them to do? Can a man have a clear discernment, unclouded with any remains of former mistake, that this is the action he ought to perform, most conducive to his own interest, and to the general good,

most delightful at the instant, and satisfactory in the review, most agreeable to reason, justice and the nature of things, and refrain from performing it? Every system which has been constructed relative to the nature of superior. beings and Gods, amidst its other errors, has reasoned truly upon these topics, and taught that the accession of wisdom and knowledge led, not to malignity and tyranny, but to benevolence and justice.

Secondly, the injustice of punishing men for their opinions and arguments will be still more visible if we reflect on the nature of punishment. Punishment is one of the classes of coercion, and, as such, may perhaps be allowed to have an occasional propriety, where the force introduced is the direct correlative of corporal violence previously exerted. But the case of false opinions and perverse arguments is of a very different nature. Does any man assert falsehood? Nothing further can appear requisite than that it should be confronted with truth. Does he bewilder us with sophistry? Introduce the light of reason, and his deceptions will vanish. Where argument, erroneous statements, and misrepresentation alone are employed, argument alone should be called forth to encounter them.

To enable us to estimate properly the value of laws for the punishment of heresy, let us suppose a country to be sufficiently provided with such laws, and observe the result. The object is to prevent men from entertaining certain opinions, or, in other words, from thinking in a certain way. What can be more absurd than to undertake to put fetters upon the subtlety of thought? How frequently does the individual who desires to restrain it in himself fail in the attempt? Add to this that prohibition and menace in this respect, will frequently give new restlessness to the curiosity of the mind. I must not so much as think of the propositions that there is no God; that the stupendous miracles of Moses and Christ were never really performed; that the dogmas of the Athanasian creed are erroneous. I must shut my eyes, and run blindly into all the opinions, religious and political, that my ancestors regarded as sacred. Will this, in all instances, be possible?

There is another consideration, trite indeed, but the triteness of which is an additional argument of its truth. Swift says 'Men ought to be permitted to think as they please, but not to propagate their pernicious opinions.'

The obvious answer to this is, 'We are much obliged to him: how would he be able to punish our heresy, even if he desired it, so long as it was concealed?' The attempt to punish opinion is absurd: we may be silent respecting our conclusions, if we please; the train of thinking by which those conclusions are generated cannot fail to be silent.

'But, if men be not punished for their thoughts, they may be punished for uttering those thoughts.' No. This is not less impossible than the other. By what arguments will you persuade every man in the nation to exercise the trade of an informer? By what arguments will you persuade my bosom-friend, with whom I repose all the feelings of my heart, to repair immediately from my company to a magistrate, in order to procure my commitment, for so doing, to the prisons of the inquisition? In countries where this is attempted, there will be a frequent struggle, the government endeavouring to pry into our most secret transactions, and the people excited to countermine, to outwit and to execrate their superintendents.

But the most valuable consideration which this part of the subject suggests is, Supposing all this were done, what judgement must we form of the people among whom it is done? Though all this cannot, yet much may be performed; though the embryo cannot be annihilated, it may be prevented from expanding itself into the dimensions of a man. The arguments by which we were supposing a system for the restraint of opinion to be recommended were arguments derived from a benevolent anxiety for the virtue of mankind, and to prevent their degeneracy. Will this end be accomplished? Let us contrast a nation of men daring to think, to speak, and to act what they believe to be right, and fettered with no spurious motivesto dissuade them from right, with a nation that fears to speak, and fears to think upon the most interesting subjects of human enquiry. Can any spectacle be more degrading than this timidity? Can men in whom mind is thus annihilated be capable of any good or valuable purpose? Can this most abject of all slaveries be the genuine state, the true perfection of the human species?

Another argument, though it has often been stated to the world, deserves to be mentioned in this place. Governments no more than individual men are infallible. The cabinets of princes and the parliaments of kingdoms, if there by any truth in considerations already stated, are often less likely to be right in their conclusions than the theorist in his closet. But, dismissing the estimate of greater and less, it was to be presumed from the principles of human nature, and is found true in fact, that cabinets and parliaments are liable to vary from each other in opinion. What system of religion or government has not, in its turn, been patronized by national authority? The consequence therefore of admitting this authority is not merely attributing to government a right to impose some, but any, or all, opinions upon the governed. Are Paganism and Christianity, the religions of Mahomet, Zoroaster and Confucius, are monarchy and aristocracy, in all their forms, equally worthy to be perpetuated among mankind? Is it certain that the greatest of human calamities is change? Must we never hope for advance and improvement? Have no revolution in government, and no reformation in religion, been productive of more benefit than disadvantage? There is no species of reasoning, in defence of the suppression of heresy, which may not be brought back to this monstrous principle that the knowledge of truth, and the introduction of right principles of policy, are circumstances altogether indifferent to the welfare of mankind.

The same reasonings that are here employed against the forcible suppression of religious heresy will be found equally valid with respect to political. The first circumstance that will not fail to suggest itself to every reflecting mind is, What sort of constitution must that be which must never be examined? whose excellencies must be the constant topic of eulogium, but respecting which we must never permit ourselves to enquire in what they consist? Can it be the interest of society to proscribe all investigation respecting the wisdom of its regulations? Or must our debates be occupied with provisions of temporary convenience; and are we forbid to ask whether there may not be something fundamentally wrong in the principles of the structure? Reason and good sense will not fail to augur ill of that system of things which is too sacred to be looked into; and to suspect that there must be something essentially weak in what thus shrinks from the eye of curiosity. Add to which that, however we may doubt of the importance of religious disputes, nothing can less reasonably be exposed to question than that the happiness of mankind is essentially connected with the improvement of political science.

That indeed, in the present situation of human affairs, is sufficiently evident, which was formerly endeavoured to be controverted, that the opinions of men are calculated essentially to affect their social condition. We can no longer, with any plausibility, lay claim to toleration, upon pretence of the innocence of error. It would not, at this time, be mere indifference, it would be infatuation, in our rulers, to say, We will leave the busily idle votaries of speculation to manage their controversies for themselves, secure that their disputes are, in no degree, of concern to the welfare of mankind.

Opinion is the most potent engine that can be brought within the sphere of political society. False opinion, superstition and prejudice, have hitherto been the true supporters of usurpation and despotism. Enquiry, and the improvement of the human mind, are now shaking to the Centre those bulwarks that have so long held mankind in thraldom. This is the genuine state of the case: how ought our governors, and the friends of public tranquillity, to conduct themselves in this momentous crisis?

We no longer claim toleration, as was formerly occasionally done, from the unimportance of opinion; we claim it because a contrary system will be found pregnant with the most fatal disasters, because toleration only can give a mild and auspicious character to the changes that are impending.

It has lately become a topic of discussion with political enquirers whether it be practicable forcibly to effect the suppression of novel opinions. Instances have been cited in which this seems to have been performed. A cool and deliberate calculation has been made, as to the number of legal or illegal murders that must be committed, the quantity of misery that must be inflicted, the extent and duration of the wars that must be carried on, according to the circumstances of the case, to accomplish this purpose.

In answer to this sort of reasoning, it may be observed, first, that, if there are instances where a spreading opinion seems to have been extirpated by violence, the instances are much more numerous where this expedient has been employed in vain. It should appear that an opinion must be in a particular degree of reception, and not have exceeded it, in order to give to this engine a chance of effecting its purpose. Above all, it is necessary that the violence by which a set of opinions is to be suppressed should be unintermitted and invariable. If it should happen, as often has happened in similar cases, that the partisans of the new opinion should alternately gain the ascendancy over their oppressors, we shall then have only an alternate succession of irritation and persecution. If there be the least intermission of the violence, it is to be expected that the persecuted party will recover their courage, and the whole business will be to be begun over again. However seriously anyone may be bent upon the suppression of opinions, it would be absurd for him to build upon the supposition that the powers of government will never be transferred to other hands, and that the measures now adopted will be equably pursued to a distant termination.

Secondly, we must surely be induced on strong grounds to form a terrible idea of the consequences to result from the ascendancy of new opinions, before we can bring ourselves to assent to such severe methods for their suppression. Inexpressible must be the enormities committed by us, before we can expect to succeed in such an undertaking. To persecute men for their opinions is, of all the denominations of violence, that to which an ingenuous mind can with the greatest difficulty be

reconciled. The persons, in this case, most obnoxious to our hostility are the upright and conscientious. They are of all men the most true to their opinions, and the least reluctant to evils in which those opinions may involve counter the evils in which those opinions may involve them. It may be they are averse to every species of disorder, pacific, benevolent, and peculiarly under the guidance of public spirit and public affections. A gallant spirit would teach us to encounter opinion with opinion, and argument with argument. It is a painful species of cowardice to which we have recourse, whatever be our motive, when we determine to overbear an opponent by violence, whom e cannot convince. The tendency of persecution is to generate the most odious vices: in one part of the community, those malevolent passions which teach us to regard our brethren as prodigies and monsters, and that treacherous and vindictive spirit which is ever lying in wait to destroy: the other part of the community, terror, hatred, hypocrisy and falsehood. Supposing us ultimately to succeed in our object, what sort of a people will be the survivors of this infernal purification?

Thirdly, opinion, though formidable in its tendencies, is perhaps never calamitous in its operation but so far as it is encountered with injustice and violence. In countries where religious toleration has been established, opposite sectaries have been found to pursue their disputes in tranquillity. It is only where measures of severity are adopted that animosity is engendered. The mere prospect of melioration may inspire a sedate and consistent ardour; but oppression and suffering are necessary to render men bitter, impatient and sanguinary. If we persecute the advocates of improvement, and fail of our object, we may fear a terrible retribution; but, if we leave the contest to its genuine course, and only apply ourselves to prevent mutual exasperation, the issue perhaps, whichever way it is determined, will be beneficent and auspicious.

God and the State by Mikhail Bakunin

I believe in the absurd; I believe in it, precisely and mainly, because it is absurd. In the same way many distinguished and enlightened minds in our day believe in animal magnetism, spiritualism, tipping tables, and — why go so far? — believe still in Christianity, in idealism, in God.

The belief of the ancient proletariat, like that of the modern, was more robust and simple, less haut goût. The Christian propagandism appealed to its heart, not to its mind; to its eternal aspirations, its necessities, its sufferings, its slavery, not to its reason, which still slept and therefore could know nothing about logical contradictions and the evidence of the absurd. It was interested solely in knowing when the hour of promised deliverance would strike, when the kingdom of God would come. As for theological dogmas, it did not trouble itself about them because it understood nothing about them The proletariat converted to Christianity constituted its growing material but not its intellectual strength.

As for the Christian dogmas, it is known that they were elaborated in a series of theological and literary works and in the Councils, principally by the converted neo-Platonists of the Orient. The Greek mind had fallen so low that, in the fourth century of the Christian era, the period of the first Council, the idea of a personal God, pure, eternal, absolute mind, creator and supreme master, existing outside of the world, was unanimously accepted by the Church Fathers; as a logical consequence of this absolute absurdity, it then became natural and necessary to believe in the

immateriality and immortality of the human soul, lodged and imprisoned in a body only partially mortal, there being in this body itself a portion which, while material is immortal like the soul, and must be resurrected with it. We see how difficult it was, even for the Church Fathers; to conceive pure minds outside of any material form. It should be added that, in general, it is the character of every metaphysical and theological argument to seek to explain one absurdity by another.

It was very fortunate for Christianity that it met a world of slaves. It had another piece of good luck in the invasion of the Barbarians. The latter were worthy people, full of natural force, and, above all, urged on by a great necessity of life and a great capacity for it; brigands who had stood every test, capable of devastating and gobbling up anything, like their successors, the Germans of today; but they were much less systematic and pedantic than these last, much less moralistic, less learned, and on the other hand much more independent and proud, capable of science and not incapable of liberty, as are the bourgeois of modern Germany. But, in spite of all their great qualities, they were nothing but barbarians — that is, as indifferent to all questions of theology and metaphysics as the ancient slaves, a great number of whom, moreover, belonged to their race. So that, their practical repugnance once overcome, it was not difficult to convert them theoretically to Christianity.

For ten centuries Christianity, armed with the omnipotence of Church and State and opposed by no competition, was able to deprave, debase, and falsify the mind of Europe It had no competitors, because outside of the Church there were neither thinkers nor educated persons. It alone though,, it alone spoke and wrote, it alone taught. Though heresies arose in its bosom, they affected only the theological or practical developments of the fundamental dogma never that dogma itself. The belief in God, pure spirit and creator of the world, and the belief in the immateriality of the soul remained untouched. This double belief became the ideal basis of the whole Occidental and Oriental civilization of Europe; it penetrated and became incarnate in all the institutions, all the details of the public and private life of all classes, and the masses as well.

After that, is it surprising that this belief has lived until the present day, continuing to exercise its disastrous influence even upon select minds, such as those of Mazzini, Michelet, Quinet, and so many others? We have seen that the first attack upon it came from the renaissance; of the free mind in the fifteenth century, which produced heroes and martyrs like Vanini, Giordano Bruno, and Galileo. Although drowned in the noise, tumult, and passions of the Reformation, it noiselessly continued its invisible work, bequeathing to the noblest minds of each generation its task of human emancipation by the destruction of the absurd, until at last, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it again reappeared in broad day, boldly waving the flag of atheism and materialism.

The human mind, then, one might have supposed, was at last about to deliver itself from all the divine obsessions. Not at all. The divine falsehood upon which humanity had been feeding for eighteen centuries (speaking of Christianity only) was once more to show itself more powerful than human truth. No longer able to make use of the black tribe, of the ravens consecrated by the Church, of the Catholic or Protestant priests, all confidence in whom had been lost, it made use of lay priests, short-robed liars and sophists. among whom the principal rôles devolved upon two fatal men, one the falsest mind, the other the most doctrinally despotic will, of the last century — J. J. Rousseau and Robespierre.

The first is the perfect type of narrowness and suspicious meanness, of exaltation without other object than his own person, of cold enthusiasm and hypocrisy at once sentimental and implacable, of the falsehood of modern idealism. He may be considered as the real creator of modern reaction. To all appearance the most democratic writer of the eighteenth century, he bred within himself the pitiless despotism of the statesman. He was the prophet of the doctrinaire State, as Robespierre, his worthy and faithful disciple, tried to become its high priest. Having heard the saying of Voltaire that, if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him, J. J. Rousseau invented the Supreme Being, the abstract and sterile God of the deists. And It was in the name of the Supreme Being, and of the hypocritical virtue commanded by this Supreme Being, that Robespierre guillotined first the Hébertists and then the very genius of the Revolution, Danton, in whose person he assassinated the Republic, thus preparing the way for the thenceforth necessary triumph of the dictatorship of Bonaparte I. After this great triumph, the idealistic reaction sought and found servants less fanatical, less terrible nearer to the diminished stature of the actual bourgeoisie. In France, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and — shall I say it? Why not? All must be said if it is truth — Victor Hugo himself, the democrat, the republican, the quasi-socialist of today! and after them the whole melancholy and sentimental company of poor and pallid minds who, under the leadership of these masters, established the modern romantic school in Germany, the Schlegels, the Tiecks, the Novalis, the Werners, the Schellings, and so many others besides, whose names do not even deserve to be recalled.

The literature created by this school was the very reign of ghosts and phantoms. It could not stand the sunlight; the twilight alone permitted it to live. No more could it stand the brutal contact of the masses. It was the literature of the tender, delicate, distinguished souls, aspiring to heaven, and living on earth as if in spite of themselves. It had a horror and contempt for the politics and questions of the day; but when perchance it referred to them, it showed itself frankly reactionary, took the side of the Church against the insolence of the freethinkers, of the kings against the peoples, and of all the aristocrats against the vile rabble of the streets. For the rest, as I have just said, the dominant feature of the school of romanticism was a quasi-complete indifference to politics. Amid the clouds in which it lived could be distinguished two real points — the rapid development of bourgeois materialism and the ungovernable outburst of individual vanities.

To understand this romantic literature, the reason for its existence must be sought in the transformation which had been effected in the bosom of the bourgeois class since the revolution of 1793.

From the Renaissance and the Reformation down to the Revolution, the bourgeoisie, if not in Germany, at least in Italy, in France, in Switzerland, in England, in Holland, was the hero and representative of the revolutionary genius of history. From its bosom sprang most of the freethinkers of the fifteenth century, the religious reformers of the two following centuries, and the apostles of human emancipation, including this time those of Germany, of the past century. It alone, naturally supported by the powerful arm of the people, who had faith in it, made the revolution of 1789 and ’93. It proclaimed the downfall of royalty and of the Church, the fraternity of the peoples, the rights of man and of the citizen. Those are its titles to glory; they are immortal!

Soon it split. A considerable portion of the purchasers of national property having become rich, and supporting themselves no longer on the proletariat of the cities, but on the major portion of the peasants of France, these also having become landed proprietors, had no aspiration left but for peace, the re-establishment of public order, and the foundation of a strong and regular government. It therefore welcomed with joy the dictatorship of the first Bonaparte, and, although always Voltairean, did not view with displeasure the Concordat with the Pope and the re-establishment of the official Church in France: "Religion is so necessary to the people!" Which means that, satiated themselves, this portion of the bourgeoisie then began to see that it was needful to the maintenance of their situation and the preservation of their newly-acquired estates to appease the unsatisfied hunger of the people by promises of heavenly manna. Then it was that Chateaubriand began to preach.

Napoleon fell and the Restoration brought back into France the legitimate monarchy, and with it the power of the Church and of the nobles, who regained, if not the whole, at least a considerable portion of their former influence. This reaction threw the bourgeoisie back into the Revolution, and with the revolutionary spirit that of scepticism also was re-awakened in it. It set Chateaubriand aside and began to read Voltaire again; but it did not go so far as Diderot: its debilitated nerves could not stand nourishment so strong. Voltaire, on the contrary, at once a freethinker and a deist, suited it very well. Béranger and P.L. Courier expressed this new tendency perfectly. "The God of the good people" and the ideal of the bourgeois king, at once liberal and democratic, sketched against the majestic and thenceforth inoffensive background of the Empire's gigantic victories such was at that period the daily intellectual food of the bourgeoisie of France.

Lamartine, to be sure, excited by a vain and ridiculously envious desire to rise to the poetic height of the great Byron, had begun his coldly delirious hymns in honour of the God of the nobles and of the legitimate monarchy. But his songs resounded only in aristocratic salons. The bourgeoisie did not hear them. Béranger was its poet and Courier was its political writer.

The revolution of July resulted in lifting its tastes. We know that every bourgeois in France carries within him the imperishable type of the bourgeois gentleman, a type which never fails to appear immediately the parvenu acquires a little wealth and power. In 1830 the wealthy bourgeoisie had definitely replaced the old nobility in the seats of power. It naturally tended to establish a new aristocracy. An aristocracy of capital first of all, but also an aristocracy of intellect, of good manners and delicate sentiments. It began to feel religious.

This was not on its part simply an aping of aristocratic customs. It was also a necessity of its position. The proletariat had rendered it a final service in once more aiding it to overthrow the nobility. The bourgeoisie now had no further need of its co-operation, for it felt itself firmly seated in the shadow of the throne of July, and the alliance with the people, thenceforth useless, began to become inconvenient. It was necessary to remand it to its place, which naturally could not be done without provoking great indignation among the masses. It became necessary to restrain this indignation. In the name of what? In the name of the bourgeois interest bluntly confessed ? That would have been much too cynical. The more unjust and inhuman an interest is, the greater need it has of sanction. Now, where find it if not in religion, that good protectress of al I the well-fed

and the useful consoler of the hungry? And more than ever the triumphant bourgeoisie saw that religion was indispensable to the people.

After having won all its titles to glory in religious, philosophical, and political opposition, in protest and in revolution, it at last became the dominant class and thereby even the defender and preserver of the State, thenceforth the regular institution of the exclusive power of that class. The State is force, and for it, first of all, is the right of force, the triumphant argument of the needle-gun, of the chassepot. But man is so singularly constituted that this argument, wholly eloquent as it may appear, is not sufficient in the long run. Some moral sanction or other is absolutely necessary to enforce his respect. Further, this sanction must be at once so simple and so plain that it may convince the masses, who, after having been reduced by the power of the State. must also be induced to morally recognise its right.

There are only two ways of convincing the masses of the goodness of any social institution whatever. The first, the only real one, but also the most difficult to adopt — because it implies the abolition of the State, or, in other words, the abolition of the organised political exploitation of the majority by any minority whatsoever — would be the direct and complete satisfaction of the needs and aspirations of the people, which would be equivalent to the complete liquidation of the political and economical existence of the bourgeois class, or, again, to the abolition of the State. Beneficial means for the masses, but detrimental to bourgeois interests; hence it is useless to talk about them.

The only way, on the contrary, harmful only to the people, precious in its salvation of bourgeois privileges, is no other than religion. That is the eternal mirage; which leads away the masses in a search for divine treasures, while much more reserved, the governing class contents itself with dividing among all its members — very unequally, moreover and always giving most to him who possesses most — the miserable goods of earth and the plunder taken from the people, including their political and social liberty.

There is not, there cannot be, a State without religion. Take the freest States in the world — the United States of America or the Swiss Confederation, for instance — and see what an important part is played in all official discourses by divine Providence, that supreme sanction of all States.

But whenever a chief of State speaks of God, be he Wil1iam I., the Knouto-Germanic emperor, or Grant, the president of the great republic, be sure that he is getting ready to shear once more his people-flock.

The French liberal and Voltairean bourgeoisie, driven by temperament to a positivism (not to say a materialism) singularly narrow and brutal, having become the governing class of the State by its triumph of 1830, had to give itself an official religion. It was not an easy thing. The bourgeoisie could not abruptly go back under the yoke of Roman Catholicism. Between it and the Church of Rome was an abyss of blood and hatred, and, however practical and wise one becomes, it is never possible to repress a passion developed by history. Moreover, the French bourgeoisie would have covered itself with ridicule if it had gone back to the Church to take part in the pious ceremonies of its worship, an essential condition of a meritorious and sincere conversion. Several attempted it, it is true, but their heroism was rewarded by no other result than a fruitless scandal. Finally, a return to Catholicism was impossible on account of the insolvable contradiction which separates

the invariable politics of Rome from the development of the economical and political interests of the middle class.

In this respect Protestantism is much more advantageous. It is the bourgeois religion par excellence. It accords just as much liberty as is necessary to the bourgeois, and finds a way of reconciling celestial aspirations with the respect which terrestrial conditions demand. Consequently it is especially in Protestant countries that commerce and industry have been developed. But it was impossible for the French bourgeoisie to become Protestant. To pass from one religion to another — unless it be done deliberately, as sometimes in the case of the Jews of Russia and Poland, who get baptised three or four times in order to receive each time the remuneration allowed them — to seriously change one's religion, a little faith is necessary. Now, in the exclusive positive heart of the French bourgeois there is no room for faith. He professes the most profound indifference for all questions which touch neither his pocket first nor his social vanity afterwards. He is as indifferent to Protestantism as to Catholicism. On the other hand, the

French bourgeois could not go over to Protestantism without putting himself in conflict with the Catholic routine of the majority of the French people, which would have been great imprudence on the part of a class pretending to govern the nation.

There was still one way left — to return to the humanitarian and revolutionary religion of the eighteenth century. But that would have led too far. So the bourgeoisie was obliged, in order to sanction its new State, to create a new religion which might be boldly proclaimed, without too much ridicule and scandal, by the whole bourgeois class.

Thus was born doctrinaire Deism.

Others have told, much better than I could tell it, the story of the birth and development of this school, which had so decisive and — we may well add — so fatal an influence on the political, intellectual, and moral education of the bourgeois youth of France. It dates from Benjamin Constant and Madame de StaÎl; its real founder was Royer-Collard; its apostles, Guizot, Cousin, Villemain, and many others. Its boldly avowed object was the reconciliation of Revolution with Reaction, or, to use the language of the school, of the principle of liberty with that of authority, and naturally to the advantage of the latter.

This reconciliation signified: in politics, the taking away of popular liberty for the benefit of bourgeois rule, represented by the monarchical and constitutional State; in philosophy, the deliberate submission of free reason to the eternal principles of faith. We have only to deal here with the latter.

We know that this philosophy was specially elaborated by M. Cousin, the father of French eclecticism. A superficial and pedantic talker, incapable of any original conception, of any idea peculiar to himself, but very strong on commonplace, which he confounded with common sense, this illustrious philosopher learnedly prepared, for the use of the studious youth of France, a metaphysical dish of his own making the use of which, made compulsory in all schools of the State under the University, condemned several generations one after the other to a cerebral indigestion. Imagine a philosophical vinegar sauce of the most opposed systems, a mixture of Fathers of the

Church, scholastic philosophers, Descartes and Pascal, Kant and Scotch psychologists all this a superstructure on the divine and innate ideas of Plato, and covered up with a layer of Hegelian immanence accompanied, of course, by an ignorance, as contemptuous as it is complete, of natural science, and proving just as two times two make five; the existence of a personal God.....

Is the Biblical Yahweh actually a dragon? By draconic chronicler

Before dismissing this out of hand, I would ask everyone read the whole post, and read it from the premise that Yahweh and El (Elohim) the actual Creator are two seperate entities, (as many serious Biblical scholars have proposed), with Yahweh actually being the one of many Bene Elohim, which also includes the creature Satan, long associated with flying serpents and dragons. I repeat, I am not proposing that "God is a Dragon", but that the Creator (El, Elohim), created "dragons" as assistants, that have been mistaken as our Gods around the world, including the "Watcher Dragon" of the Hebrews called Yahweh, who through a minunderstanding of scripture is now worshipped by most Christians and Jews as the actual creator.

Here are the facts:

1. The highest heavenly creatures are called Seraphim, a word which the highly esteemed and scholarly Jewish Enclyclopedia states means "fiery flying serpent", though medieval Christians have transformed these "dragons" into the more familiar, swan-winged, "cartoon" angels of popular culture. When the ancient Jews translated the word Seraphim into Greek, the word they used was drakon, which is the word our modern "dragon" is derived from.

2. The only graven image/idol Yahweh ever permits is that of a "fiery flying serpent", obviously his personal image, This image has supernatural powers, and Yahweh allows it to be freely worshipped in Solomon's temple. As soon as the idol is broken, disaster befalls Israel and it has never recovered until the late 20th century.

3. The flood story of Genesis is believed by most Biblical scholars to be a "retelling" of near identical, yet far older Sumerian versions in which the God name Enlil, who is also subservient to a greater Creator God is called "a Great Serpent-Dragon of Heaven". His hymns also associate him with rainbows as we see in Genesis, and he is called "the good shepherd".

4. Some scholars acknowledge that the Name Yahweh comes from the Cannanite Dragon God Yaw, who like the Biblical Yahweh is a god of storms and floods, but is a "son" of the true Creator Elohim, also the name of the Creator in Genesis, not Yahweh.

5. Virtually every world culture had identified the winged intelligent dragon as a real creature, and most of the earliest cultures recognize it as the creatue that brought them knowledge of agriculture and technology. This is also true in the Judaic legends with the reptilian "watchers".

6. In Exodous, Yahweh leaves his dragon sized tent, and flies ahead of the Israelites to burn away impassable briars and scorpions. He marks the route by spewing smoke and fire.

7. Yahweh plops his huge dragon body in the bed of the Jordan River upstream to divert its flow so the Hebrews can cross its bed to attack Jericho.

8. He is specifically described spewing fire from his mouth and smoke from his nostrils, exactly like the dragon like Leviathan that the Bible states he "plays" with. (A female dragon?)

9. Many biblical passages imply that Yahweh physically consumed his meat offerings unlike the "fake" gods of other cultures. The Bible is very specific that Yahweh wanted salt on his meat as well, suggesting these offereing were physically consumed and not merely burned to ashes.

10. Like many legendary dragons, Yahweh occasionally "consumes" humans as well, to include two of Aaron's sons who prepared a sacrifice wrong. In scripture, Yahweh demanded the first born of all Israelites, but the bible says it was possible to pay him money instead, on a sliding scale, also indicating the univesal dragon love of hoarding treasure.

11. The preferred prey of dragons in most cultures are "human virgins" for reasons which are not entirely understood. This trait is very apparent in the Bible as well, where Moses presents Yahweh with 32 Midianite virgins after the Israelite destruction of this tribe. No more is said of them so we can only assume they were "consumed" like Aaron's sons.

12. The Persian Zoroastrians, whom share much reiligous doctrine with Christianity clearly state in their own scriptures (the Denkard), that the "God" of Judaism and Christianity who watched of the Israelites and provided their laws was a dragon, and brother to the dragon Ahriman in their own religion. Interestingly, the storm dragon of Sumeria who flooded the world happened to be brother to the dragon Enki who livied the the garden of Eden and who "tricked" a man named "Adam" out of eternal life.

13. Some Christian gnostics also state Yahweh is a dragon in their scriptures.

14. Jesus stated the Pharisees were worshipping a creature that was NOT his father. Many Christians claim Jesus meant Satan, but this does not make sense, for the Jews clearly worshipped Yahweh and clearly recognized Satan as a distinctly different creature which they definately DID NOT worship. Could Jesus have been referring to the Yahweh dragon? After all he did not call to Yahweh from the cross, but to El. The first paragraphs of the Bible show these are two different entities, for El's creation story is completely different from Yahweh's, far less scientific one.

15. Yahweh is described with "feathers", as depicted on most of the most acnient dragon wings and this idea lasted until medieval times, after which dragons became less commonly seen. Saphira in Eragon is reminesecent of these ancient dragon depictions, and probably inspired the design of this character.

Actually there is enough evidence of Yahweh "being a dragon" to literally "fill a book", (as it indeed has, in my upcoming one on this precise subject des), but thought this is an adequate amount of Biblical facts to gender an interesting discussion.

Can anyone refute these Biblical facts? And shouldn't Christians want to embrace these facts, for the worldwide belief in dragons as benificent supernatural entities has far more theological and even scientific precedent than "a bearded old guy on a golden throne? Might it not be a good idea to recreate the fiery flying serpent image Yahweh ordered Moses to make, something very good that cured sickness, and which Yahweh allowed to be worshipped in his temple for centuries, Israel

prospering during all the time it was worshipped, and was virtually annihlated as soon as it was broken?

And might there not be some volunteer virgins willing to appease Him for the good of all mankind, not to mention starting up a daily ration of unblemished calves and lambs like the good old days? And liqour. He asks for liquor in the Book of Genesis. (Actually a lot of the ancient Dragon Gods ask for liquor).

There are many scholarly articles that convincingly argue that orignally El and Yahweh are different Entities. This is why there are two completely different creation stories in Genesis, the original, evolution friendly version credited to El and the fairy tale version to Yahweh. And archaeology PROVES That the original Storm dragon Yaw of Cannanite mythology was the son of El, exactly as it is stated in Psalms, and implied in Deuteronomy.

And BOTH Storm Dragon Yaw, and Yahweh the Storm God acknowledge Ba'al Hadad as their sworn enemy. WAKE UP Moondog, they are the same diety. That why the Bible say Yahweh breathes fire, has wings, creates floods, blocks rivers with his body, eats virgins, and hordes gold. As well as being jealous, vindictive, cruel, and generally ungodlike. But don't blame him, he's a dragon who works for El, the creator, just like Quin Ling, Queztalcoatl, Kuklakan, etc. 100 million years ago it was the smartest creature to be a heavenly assistant.

We've gone over this time and time again Moondoggy. NOBODY supports your view. The Jewish Encyclopeadia isn't the only source that states the Seraphim are reptilian creatures, just about EVERY Encyclopedia states this except Christian sources with an "agenda". And we have proof from ancient scriptures translated from Hebrew to Greek, translated by the ancient Jewish priests and Rabbis that translated the Seraphim to DRAKONS. This is an undeniable fact. And there are BOTH ancient Jewish and Christian scriptures that state in black and white that Drakons reside in Heaven. By the middle ages even the Jews became ignorant of much of their ancient knowledge that had to be rediscovered through archaology. And as I explained before, ancient Jewish religious laws prescribed exactly how HOLY DRAKONS must be depicted, and these HOLY DRAKONS decorate the MOST HOLY Jewish religious artifact after the Ark of the covenant, the seven branched Menorah.

You are living in total denial guy. The highest heavenly creatures in Judao Christian Theology are Drakons, including Yahweh.

And yes, Yahweh's Personal Idol which the Hebrews had to adore or be killed by dragons (fiery flying serpents) is called the NehashaTAN. Nehash - Serpent, TAN= Tannyn - DRAGON. Serpent Dragon, the same Title give to the Sumerian Storm Dragon Enlil who flooded the Earth, and who was renamed Yaw by the Cannanites, and who would become Yahweh.

Below is an article by a Christian who is also an expert in Hebrew who supports the fact the Seraphim are flying reptiles, EXACTLY as the Jewish Scholars who wrote the Jewish Encyclopedia say.

Give it up Moondog. The thing that supports your idea of the swan winged, Pagan humanoid "cartoon angel" Seraphim, are ignorant people of the middle ages that lost their knowledge in the

dark ages, and of course, your Christian Sunday School Coloring books. All of the archaeology, and ancient scriptures, and Christian and Jewish art ALL SUPPORT the Draconic Seraphim. It is such common knowledge among real Jews in Israel that the AH 64 Helicopter is called the Seraph, after the Biblical Fiery flying serpent. You lose.

Serpentine / Reptilian Divine Beings in the Hebrew Bible: A Preliminary Investigation

Michael S. Heiser

Introduction

The focus of this brief overview into the matter of serpentine / reptilian beings in the Hebrew Bible arises from a study of the biblical Mypr#o (seraphim). Traditionally, the word seraphim has been understood to derive from the Hebrew verb Pr#o (saraph; "to burn" – hence, seraphim would mean "burning ones" or "fiery ones"). While this is certainly possible, there is another very plausible (and I would say more likely) possibility that either eliminates seraph as the root, or co-exists and overlaps with it (I think the latter). This alternative root would mean there are clear, unmistakable references to serpentine / reptilian beings in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. Naturally, for readers of The Façade (or inquirers on my website), this would dovetail with what I refer to as the "Watcher paradigm" – that the Watchers, reptilian beings described in religious texts of great antiquity (cf. the Dead Sea fragment 4QAmram), are the "root origin" of the worldwide serpent mythologies that have serpentine gods / flying serpentine beings as those divine beings which bestowed high technology to mankind and which fathered the first line of god-(human) kings.

The Data to Consider

It is plain from the contents of the Hebrew Bible that a saraph is a serpent. The word (as a singular or plural noun) occurs seven times. During the desert wanderings of the Israelites under the leadership of Moses, God judges the people (Numbers 21:6) by sending ~ypir'F.h; ~yvix'N>h; (hannechashim hasseraphim; "seraph serpents") to bite them. The translation "seraph serpents" is more accurate than "fiery serpents" (KJV) as we shall see. When the people prayed (Numbers 21:7) that the "serpents" (there, nachash) be taken away, Moses intercedes for the people. God then instructs Moses to make a saraph (Pr#o) and to put it on a pole, so that all who would look at it would be healed from the bites (Numbers 21:8). Moses responds (Numbers 21:9) by building a tv,xon> vx;n> (nechash nechosheth). Note that in this narrative, the Hebrew words nachash and saraph are used interchangeably. This points to the fact that a saraph is not a "fiery thing" but simply a serpent. As further proof of this interchangeability, in Deuteronomy 8:15 Yahweh is praised twice for bringing Israel through the desert with its notorious nachash saraph. With this interchange as backdrop, the prophet Isaiah's use of saraph/ seraphim sets up the issue of reptilian / serpentine divine beings. In Isa. 14: 29 and 30:6, Isaiah mentions the @peA[m. @r'f' (saraph me(opheph; literally, "flying serpent"). More on this below. The famous throne room vision of Isaiah in chapter 6 of his book notes that in the throne room of Yahweh there were seraphim – serpentine beings. These beings also had wings and could fly, and had human features as well (hands, face, feet): Isa 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. 2 Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did

fly. 3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, [is] the Lord of hosts: the whole earth [is] full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, [which] he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: 7 And he laid [it] upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. 8 Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here [am] I; send me. In putting these features together, let's return first to Isaiah 30:6. In that text, the flying serpents come from the Negev, that desert area between Palestine and Egypt. These were either real animals, or the term denoted some type of spiritual (cosmic) enemy. The latter seems preferable, since throughout the ancient world certain deities were described in such terms (flying serpents), and there is no such flying animal.1 The term could also be used of human enemies, as is implied by the other reference to flying serpents above, Isaiah 14:29: 1 Some speculate that Isaiah is referencing a pterodactyl-like animal, which is both unlikely and unnecessary given the surrounding religions.

Isa 14:29 Rejoice not, O Philistia, because the rod of him that smote you is broken: for out of the serpent's (nachash) root shall come forth an asp, and his fruit shall be a flying serpent (saraph me(opheph). %Kem; jb,ve rB;v.nI yKi %LeKu tv,l,p. yxim.f.Ti-la; WTT Isa 14:29 @peA[m. @r'f' Ayr.piW [p;c, aceyE vx'n" vr,Vomi-yKi This passage is noteworthy on several levels. Three times the enemy of Israel, the "chosen seed" (cf. Genesis 3:15ff.) is described in serpentine terms. The "root" or "seed" (offspring, in Hebrew idiom) is described as the root of the nachash. Readers of The Façade will instantly recognize this being as the one in the garden of Eden who seduced Adam and Eve. In The Façade, I argue that the "serpent" (Hebrew, nachash) in the Eden story of Genesis 3 was not a snake – it was a divine being, a rebel of the divine council, which met in Eden, the garden of God.2 God curses all parties concerned at the Fall in Genesis 3. One of the curses involves the "seed" of the nachash being bitterly opposed (a perpetual enemy) of the "seed" of the woman (Eve). The seed of the woman is obviously humanity (and ultimately, the Messiah; cf. Gal. 3:16). Who are the seed of the nachash? They are both the original enemies of the divinely chosen seed of the godly (Noah), produced by fallen divine beings in Genesis 6:1-4. These offspring are called the nephilim (giants) and gibborim (mighty warriors). The nephilim and / or gibborim produce succeeding generations of enemies of God's chosen seed (Israel). It is no mistake that Moses and Joshua and their armies continually run into these descendants (like the Anakim; cf. Deuteronomy 3 and Numbers 13). Later enemies, like the Philistines spoken of in Isaiah 14:29 above, are logically referred to as the "seed of the nachash" (recall Goliath the giant was a Philistine, and a descendant of one the nephilim lines). Curiously, though, they are also called "flying serpents". What about that? 2 See Ezekiel 28:10ff. Note the PDF file available on my website bookstore that details these terms as standard descriptions in ancient Canaan for the divine council's meeting place.

In general (preliminary) terms, it seems to me that "flying seraph" would be a better translation of Isaiah 14:29 – his fruit shall be a flying seraph (saraph me(opheph). The meaning behind this, as I see it, is that Israel's enemies would be descendants of the reptilian / serpentine beings who

seduced human women in Genesis 6. These beings are called Watchers in the book of 1 Enoch, and are described as reptilian in the Dead Sea fragment, 4QAmram. It is clear from several passages in 1 Enoch that the writer there considered the seraphim to be serpentine beings (cf. 1 Enoch 20:7, 71:7; 61:10 – a description of the cherubim and the serpentine beings who guard God's throne –cf. Isaiah 6). Seraphim, then, are reptilian / serpentine beings – they are the Watchers (the "watchful ones" who diligently guard God's throne, which is carried [cf. Ezekiel 1, 10] by the cherubim, who may also serve as guardians).3 There are "good" serpentine beings (seraphim) who guard God's throne (so Isaiah 6's seraphim), and there are fallen, wicked serpentine beings (seraphim) who rebelled against the Most High at various times, and who became the pagan gods of the other nations. Interestingly, 4QAmram adds a feature to the serpentine Watcher that stands opposed to the good heavenly watchers: the evil Watchers of 4QAmram are also described as "dark". This stands in opposition to the luminous or "brassy" appearance of good heavenly seraphim. A Brief note on the Root of Seraphim Above I noted that there was an alternative root possibility that dovetails more readily with the serpentine context of seraphim. Rather than the traditional root of saraph ("to burn"), the root of seraphim may come from the Egyptian srf ("serpent"). Isaiah especially is known for its Egyptian flavor in parts, and there are numerous texts and artworks in This conclusion is very tentative, and reflects my suspicion that the reason that descriptions of seraphim, cherubim, and Watchers (in Daniel) as "human like beings clothed in white linen" have overlapping features (hands, feet, human face, wings) is that they are names for the same entities (cf. not all cherubim have four faces, e.g.). This would make Satan an original Watcher – at one time a guardian of the divine throne. I am still thinking about all this, though, and my views may change. Egypt that describe and depict serpents. Many of them have the srf as having wings or flying. Others combine this description with fire (and so this may give rise to a dual wordplay in the Hebrew Bible – where seraphim refers to a luminous serpentine divine being). This seems most consistent. For further reference (texts and iconography):

Karen Joines, Serpent Symbolism in the Old Testament: A Linguistic, Archaeological, and Literary Study (Haddonfield House, New Jersey, 1974)

"Serpent" in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (Brill, 1999)

Even Jesus plainly states that the Pharisees were worshipping "The Murderer from the beginning", and NOT his Father the Creator. In Fact, Jesus does not call to Yahweh from the cross, He calls to Eloi (Elohim), who according to Cannanite theology was the Father/Creator of the Storm Dragon Yaw, who would be called Yahweh by the Hebrews. Chrisitians today believe Jesus is referring to Satan, but this makes knows sense becasue the Pharisees were conciously worshipping Yahweh.

the Hebrew flood story is based on the Sumerian one. But the Sumerian god who causes the flood is called a dragon, just as Yaw, who becomes Yahweh is called a dragon, ans who is responsible for the same flood. They are clearly the same dragon God known to different people by different names.

Yahweh is first mentioned in Genesis, during the "second creation story". Many scholars believe this was added by the "Yahwehist Priests" much later, and it is completly different with man being

created first, before everything else. The Elohim creation is remarkably consistent with Evolution, with life beginning in the sea, with fish, then dragons (dinosaurs) with birds, followed by mammals and man on the last day.

Flood is not just a Sumerian myth. You can even find a native american legend of a flood and a hollow tree of cypress in which a Noahian figure puts various animals.

I think sumerian attribution of flood to YAH is pretty much as misguided as Jewish attribution of YHWH to Father.

What I think is that flood was indeed a collective decision of the entire council of gods, and the Father, as a way of starting a new world.

They needed a planet with suitable vessels where souls can incarnate, but earth at the time was just anything but that, it was no place where you can send souls to learn and grow, so it needed to be destroyed to make a new generation of vessels.

The entire ecosystem had been corrupted in one way or another by meddling of all kinds of gods, and entities from other worlds, and they simply chose the purest lines of creatures to mend what had been done.

You find find entries in the Bible and other texts suggesting that these beings not only mixed with people, but with animals too.

In fact, the legend of Mu says that it was flooded because the reptilian people inhabiting it were matting with all kinds of animals.

It doesn't mean that every person destroyed in the flood was punished and went to hell. It really has nothing to do with that.

It was a plan of destroying the genetic lineages that had been created so far. Its not revenge, it's gardening of biological life.

the early Old Testament the foreign gods were real as well, but Yahweh was believed to be the best and most powerful god. Yahweh was one of 70 "sons" divided among the different human tribes. I believe these were all "dragons" becasue we have such similar creatures all aorund the world dispensing wisdom to mankind and given sacrifices in return.

Though not commonly publicised, besides the traditional lambs and calves, Yahweh is given captive enemy virgins, and in Genesis He demands the first born son of every Hebrew family, as well as first born animals, and liqour. Dragons the world over always ask for liquour. One time Yahweh consort Ishtar, also originally called a "great and terrible dragon" in her Hymns, is described craving beer.

Some people claim The first born sons that are to be offered to Yahweh only mean to be priests or servants, but there is nothing else in the scripture to support this notion. On the contrary, they are mentioned in the same sentence as other "consumables" such as fruit and liquor.

Genesis 22:29 Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me.

Also the next verse confirms these things are to be offered as Yahweh's food.

22:30 Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen, and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it to me.

There can be no doubt this meant sacrifices and not servitude for God says LIKEWISE animals would be given to him, and we know these were not intended to be servants, but sacrifices.

Yahweh consumes two priests who were Aaron's sons becasue they didn't cook the sacrifice properly, so he ate them instead. It may be that they forgot to put salt on the fatted calf. This is possible, becasue after this event, the bible is very specific that all of Yahweh meat offerings must be salted.

Of course these sacrifices were orignally meant to literally "feed" the God. Why else would there be instructions how to specifically season the meat? And there are many passages in the Bible and other ancient literatrue of the Gods being attracted to the offering by the delicious smells.

Yahweh cuts the Israelites some slack later on during the exodus and allows His people to ransom their children out of being sacrificed/eaten. The meatier/heavier the intended victim, the more money it costs to buy him back from Yahweh, again clearly indicating their value as real "food". Also to our modern minds, to a God, what would be the point of sacrifices if the God did not actually eat the sacrifices? And if God was merely a spirit there would be no point of sacrifices at all, yet virtually every culture that DID have dragon gods also gave them sacrifices of some sort.

Now later, when the dragons were no longer allowed to interfere in hman affairs, the sacrifices lef to them became symbolic, but there seems to be a literal origin to this practice, and these dragons seem to be very physical creatures. Yahweh blocks the Jordan river with his huge physical body, in Psalms he shelters people with WINGS, He spews fire from his mouth, and smoke from his nostrils, and he "eats". But this is not God, the original Biblical God is El, the creator, who generally is not given sacrifices of real food becasue he is a spirit creature that seems to have created or modified the dragon assistannts recorded all over the world.

Few other dragon gods seem to be as generous as Yahweh in these matters, but it may be that with so many animals available from his subjects, he preferred more gold over eating their children. This love of treasure is another universal trait of dragons. After all the midainites were slaughtered, Yahweh asked for all of the gold taken off their bodies to make the Israelites attone for the slaugher, and he did get all of those virgins too.The scriptures are very clear that Yahweh demanded the first born sons of all the Hebrews, and one time he was given no less than 32 virgins. But fortunately, Yahweh likes treasure too , so for the right price you could by your son back. Its all in the Bible.

It is fully documented that the Hebrews originally acknowledge there was indeed a "god behind the dragon" as you say. The Bible states Yahweh was the greatest of the "Sons of God", and was the "Son" who picked the Hebrew people, just as they believed Ba'al Haddad was another son of the same Creator who picked the Cannanites.

But later on, the Jews would "forget" these things and say that all of the other "Sons of God" in the Bible are "false" and they would meld the dragons Yahweh into El the non-dragon, supernatural creator, and make them the same God. This is why there are two different creation stoires in Genesis, Elohim's Creation that reflects evolution and Yahweh's more fanciful creation in which Adam is the first thing created on the Earth, and animals later, "to keep him company"

the original source material that the Seraphim of the Bible are definately winged reptilian entities. And the ancient Jews translated the word Seraphim to Drakons. And the ancient Christians depicted them as winged serpents or dragons. And the ancient Jews decorated the holiest temple furniture with "Holy" Drakons, and the scholars of the esteemed Jewish Encyclopedia state they were originally winged reptiles, and even today in Israel, this is such common knowledge that the AH64 attack helicopter is nicknamed the Seraph, complete with a seraph dragon painted on its nose. Oh, and the ancient Egyptian had a winged serpent-dragon called a Seraph as well. The evidence is overwhelming Moondoggy.

There is a very good reason the word seraph ALSO means burning, or fiery. It is becasue this is what dragons "do". They burn things with their fiery breath. And Yahweh's fiery breath and smoldering nostrils are described in the Bible.

Its pretty clear Judaism was not a monotheism until after the Jews returned from their Babylonian captivity. Prior to this, the 69 other Bene elohim (70 including Yahweh) were all sons of El though the Hebrews regarded Yahweh as the greatest and wisest. This is plainly stated in Psalms and Deuteronomy as discussed before, and this is an identical belief to the Cannanites, in which the Dragon Yaw was the favored son of El. The Jews even acknowledged Yahweh's consort Asheroth. The hostility between Yaw and Ba'al in both Hebrew and Cannanite theology may stem from a rivalry over the dragoness Asheroth. Yaw apparently wins when all of Ba'al worshippers are slaughtered by the Hebrews. With no sacrifices, he would leave, though occasionally there are Biblical accounts of people wanting to gain Ba'al Haddad's favor, which angered Yahweh.

The theory that Yahweh is a "volcano god" is pretty lame. He is described with fire spewing from his mouth, smoke from his nostrils. He is described with wings and is given virgins and meat sacrifices, and when known as Yaw his was called a dragon, just as Zoroastrians and gnostic Christians also acknowledge.

It is the dragons Yahweh, brother of Ahriman that is supposed to destroy a third of mankind in the Zoroastrian legends. When John rewrote this for Revelation, the dragon becomes an army of snake tailed, fire spewing horses with mouths like lions., but they do kill the exact same one third of mankind. Coincidence?

Yahweh is probably representative, though His important among other dragons may mean he is larger. The parameters we have are the fact these dragons are large enough to swallow people alive (as several accounts and even some scripture attest, yet Yahweh must be small enough to comfortably fit in his tabernacle. I think 60 feet is a good estimate, thus comparable to the largest known carnivorous dinosaur, the Spinosaur. Yahweh also uses his massive dragon body to divert the Jordan River. The exact location is mentioned in the Bible, and having visited the vicinity, I

would say a sixty foot long theropod like Spinosaur, and therefore presumeably Yahweh, could divert the river there exactly like the bible describes, and with no hocus pocus, just tons of dragon.

it states Yahweh is the son of a greater God, which would be El, exactly as the ancient Hebrews believed before the monotheistic reforms made after the Babylonian captivity. And the Cannanite dragon Yaw was also the son of the great El, the creator in the first Genesis account.

Another interesting fact is that Aarons rod does not turn into a snake, but into a dragon, a Tannin. This creature is incorrectly translated in most modern Bibles as whale, but obviously a whale isn't goint to be flopping around in the middle of Pharoahs court. Sorcery if forbidden by God in the Bible yet Moses seems to be a sorcerer. I believe this story was changed when Yahweh was turned into a monotheistic, humanoid God. Originally the staff was probably used to summon the Dragon Yahweh when Moses was in danger, and perhps it was he who swallowed up the Egyptians trying to harm Moses. How else could moses surived this audience with Pharoah? Later, when yahweh was no longer supposed to be a dragon, the story was changed.

The word Tannin is used for the creatures created along with the birds in the Elohim creation story in the epoch after the fish, but before the mammals. They are huge creatures, and must mean the dinosaurs (which have a connection with birds, which science has only recently discovered), but also this word is used for the dragons who live in the time of men, that sing praises to God, and helps Moses in the encounter with Pharoah.

the bronze libation bowl discovered decades later and now believed to be Babylonian loot from the temple of Solomon. It depicts the brazen seraph on a pole, and it is in fact, a winged reptile. If it was a simple snake, it would not have been worshipped. It was worshipped becasue it was obviously the idol of Yahweh, but nowadays this notion is unthinkable to both Jews and Christians, so do not expect to get an unbiased account from these sources. Yahweh is described with wings, breathing fire and smoke, with a body large enough to block rivers, is offered virgins, apparently eats first born children along with calves and lambs, and ordered an idol of a winged dragon built and worshipped under pain of death. If this diety was anything but the God of the Jews and Christians, intelligent people woud say this is obviously a dragon god.

Read Heiser's article. The creatures that attack the Israelites are no mere snakes, but supernatural winged reptiles that serve the Hebrew God (or they are Yahweh's dragon buddies out for a good time).i Or they could be both, actually.

the most knowledgeable Jewish scholars admit the Menorah is Jewish, and an authentic likeness of the original, because the dragons conform to Jewish religious laws that clearly state how a "holy" dragon must be depicted (AZ 43a) . Now why would a pagan Roman sculptor scrupulously follow Jewish religious laws to insure these were holy dragons? The sculptor wouldn't. This proves it is not a Roman invention. In fact, this early Imperial art was known for its photographic-like perfection. Even the sandal laces are completely accurate.

All of the ancient Jewish and Christian art and literature portray the Seraphim as reptilian creatures, which the ancient Jews themselves translated to Drakons as the ancient scriptures prove.

Like the book of Isaiah plainly states, fiery flying serpents/draKons were God's highest attendants, and this is why they were depicted on the holiest Jewish temple furniture. And like the OP states, Yahweh Himself was also a dragon.

If we accept the premise that events and creatures in the Bible actually exist, then the Bible supports my argument far more than it does the "stereotype, modern Christiain, Non-Biblical, Sunday School mythology" believed in by the majority of today's Christians. There is actually far more evidence for the dragons that occur in virtually every human belief system (including original Christianity and Judaism) than there is for any other kind of God, angel or demon. Now they are all supposedly invisible spririts, but this is not what the Bible says. In the real Bible, angels eat food and have sex with women. Yahweh eats children and likes salt on his fatted calves, has great wings, breathes fire and blocks rivers with his huge dragon body. These things are plainly stated in the Bible as well as Yahweh's murderous behaviour, jealousies and paranoia. But unlike most Christians, I never stated that this dragon is God. Nor does Jesus. That is why this is so amusing. Christians are fullfilling their own prophecies in Revelation, as the accursed ones who "worship the dragon", yet stupidly point to Satanists who are in reality simply colorful atheists who do not even believe in "the dragon", but stage their "praise Satan" antics just to mock Christianity.

Before Herod improved it with images of Yahweh or his relatives, there is some evidence the earlier Menorah had a tripod base, though this is not said when Moses was given instructions to make it. The State of Israel uses this shape menorah with the dragon base as the official menorah. How could you possbily question them for not being Jewish?

The popular concept of Nessie has the basic draco form as the creatures on the Menorah, a long neck. reptilian head and tail. We really do not know if Nessie and other lake monsters have fins or legs.

The Babylonian Mushushu would look much like nessie if submerged in the water with the feet hidden. Same long neck, same reptilian head.

The winged Mushushu is quite similar to the wingless ones, with same style head, longish neck, similar tail, simlar clawed feet. If the wings were closely folded to the body like a bird, (as many medieval dragons are depicted, it would be difficult to even notice the wings. Nessie could have such wings just like aquatic birds like the commorant.

Jesus acknowledged the Holy Torah, and accoridng to it, Yahweh is not God, El is. Psalms and Deuteronomy both explain Yahweh is only one of many sons of El in the court of El the creator. Yahweh was the Bene Elohim in charge of the Hebrews, just as Ba'al was for the Cannanites. In this early period, Ba'al Haddad and the other "sons of Enlil" were just a real as Yahweh. Only much later was Yahweh and El combined. And as the OP shows, Yahweh, and the other "Sons", both in Sumeria and in Cannan are called dragons. Just because most modern Christians are completely ignorant of what the Old Testament is about, doesn't mean Jesus was. Jesus did not say Satan was the murderer from the beginning. He said the creature that the Pharisees worshipped was. The Pharisees worshipped Yahweh, not Satan. The problem is that most Christians now do not understand this. In ancient times many Christians knew the truth but they were defeated by the

Roman Catholics and their writings mostly destroyed, though we are finding them again through archaeology.

These dragons used by the creator are not evil devils, nor are they particularly benificent Gods. Yahweh demanded the first born children of the Hebrews, but later would accept gold in their place. He is jealous and vengeful. These are not characteristics of an all wise creator entity, but an eating, drinking physical creature, which all over the world, creatures like him became surroagate gods that helped fledgling human societies, but they expected to be fed lambs, calves, and often children for their troubles. Jesus knew all of this, and when he called to his God from the cross, it was El, and not the dragon Yaw.

As for the menorah, this was discussed at length before. The most knowledgable Jewish rabbis acknowledge the Menorah on Titus' Arch conforms to Jewish religious law. This is why it is the menorah adopted by the state of Israel, as well as the menorah that has been recreated by the Jewish group trying to rebuild the temple. The dragons on the Menorah are Holy Dragons that are specifically described in AZ43a that explains exactly how they must be depicted in art.are given smooth bodiesnot depiect

From an ultra Jewish Website called Failedmessiah.com " In the lower hexagon are three panels with various kete (plural of ketos). A ketos is called drakon by Hazal; in the Mishna Avodah Zara 3:3 it shows that a drakon was suspect of being a symbol of AZ. How would that get into the Temple? Even worse, the eagle was the symbol of Imperial Rome, and as such was an anathema to Jews longing to be free of Roman rule. However, the picture cannot be simply an invention of a Roman artist. The arms are are equidistant from each other, and the distance equals the width of the arms (another universal characteristic of Jewish sources), they all go up to an equal height, and even the ratio of the distance from the base to the lower arms to the rest of the height matches the ratio given by Hazal. And there are clear g'vi'im, kaftorim and p'rahim on the arms. This must be a representation of the Menorah of the Hekhal. So how can we explain the base? R. Daniel Sperber gives the correct answer, IMHO. He notes that usually a ketos has a nymph perched on its back, and scales on its neck, and shows pictures of a very similar from a Roman temple in Didyma with such a nymph. In e), there is no nymph and no scales on the neck. He quotes the g'moro AZ 43a that a drakon that is osur has scales on its neck, and the Tosefta in AZ that says "if the neck was smooth, it is muttar."

This means, that even though pagans also believed in and depicted dragons, dragons acceptable to Jewish Law (being the seraphim that were being translated to the word Drakon during this same period), had smooth necks without the spines of the pagan dragons. Also a Jewish archaeologist states there are no "Roman Eagles" on the Menorah, but these are winged angels

It is confusing until you understand the nature of the Watcher Dragons assigned to the human race to all of the ancient cultures, as worldwode dragon legends attest to. El the creator allowed no fighting among his dragons, nor could they harm the humans of another dragon. So for Yaw to take back the territory of Ba'al Hadad, Yaw humans had to kill all of Ba'als. With no more children, lambs and calves fed to him, he had to leave to find new territories. Yaw blocked the Jordan with his body so the Hebrews could pass through its bed, and he could knock down the walls of Jericho,

but he could not harm Ba'al people. But in order to expel Ba'al from Cannan, all of his followers had to die. Even the domestic animals had to die because they belonged to the worshippers of Baal, and many would have been fed to him, just as Yaw expected a minimum of two lambs a day, plus first born offspring of every female beast and human of the Israelites. But by this time, Yaw's love of gold (like most dragons) was such that he allowed families to "buy back" the children, and the bible contains elaborate details on how much it would cost to get them back based on their weight/size, like and other meat.

JEWS were FORBIDDEN to depict the temple menorah also according to religious law. So what did the JEWS do? The copied a synagogue menorah with 3 simple legs instead. And why couldn't they copy the Temple menorah? Because it had Yahweh's dragon image on them. The AZ 3 that instructed that vessels with the image of a dragon were to be thown in the dead sea referred to those depicting Pagan symbols, not only the pagan spined dragon, but also stars. 43 a was written AFTER 3 and carefully defined how a holy dragon must be depicted.

Now think about this a minute. The Jews were NOT allowed to represent the temple menorah, undoubtedly becasue it had Yahweh's image on it. A SEA DRAGON exactly as YAW is described. But the ROMANS had no such inhibition. They copied the menorah EXACTLY as they saw it, just as all art historians would agree. Everything on the arch is photographic quality, and so should be the Menorah.

Yahweh is Yaw, the cannanite dragon, who was also the Sumerian dragon who is said to have caused the great deluge. Here's a recap since you have so much trouble remembering the facts in the Bible:

1. The highest heavenly creatures are called Seraphim, a word which the highly esteemed and scholarly Jewish Enclyclopedia states means "fiery flying serpent", though medieval Christians have transformed these "dragons" into the more familiar, swan-winged, "cartoon" angels of popular culture. When the ancient Jews translated the word Seraphim into Greek, the word they used was drakon, which is the word our modern "dragon" is derived from.

2. The only graven image/idol Yahweh ever permits is that of a "fiery flying serpent", obviously his personal image, This image has supernatural powers, and Yahweh allows it to be freely worshipped in Solomon's temple. As soon as the idol is broken, disaster befalls Israel and it has never recovered until the late 20th century.

3. The flood story of Genesis is believed by most Biblical scholars to be a "retelling" of near identical, yet far older Sumerian versions in which the God name Enlil, who is also subservient to a greater Creator God is called "a Great Serpent-Dragon of Heaven". His hymns also associate him with rainbows as we see in Genesis, and he is called "the good shepherd".

4. Some scholars acknowledge that the Name Yahweh comes from the Cannanite Dragon God Yaw, who like the Biblical Yahweh is a god of storms and floods, but is a "son" of the true Creator Elohim, also the name of the Creator in Genesis, not Yahweh.

5. Virtually every world culture had identified the winged intelligent dragon as a real creature, and most of the earliest cultures recognize it as the creatue that brought them knowledge of agriculture and technology. This is also true in the Judaic legends with the reptilian "watchers".

6. In Exodous, Yahweh leaves his dragon sized tent, and flies ahead of the Israelites to burn away impassable briars and scorpions. He marks the route by spewing smoke and fire.

7. Yahweh plops his huge dragon body in the bed of the Jordan River upstream to divert its flow so the Hebrews can cross its bed to attack Jericho.

8. He is specifically described spewing fire from his mouth and smoke from his nostrils, exactly like the dragon like Leviathan that the Bible states he "plays" with. (A female dragon?)

9. Many biblical passages imply that Yahweh physically consumed his meat offerings unlike the "fake" gods of other cultures. The Bible is very specific that Yahweh wanted salt on his meat as well, suggesting these offereing were physically consumed and not merely burned to ashes.

10. Like many legendary dragons, Yahweh occasionally "consumes" humans as well, to include two of Aaron's sons who prepared a sacrifice wrong. In scripture, Yahweh demanded the first born of all Israelites, but the bible says it was possible to pay him money instead, on a sliding scale, also indicating the univesal dragon love of hoarding treasure.

11. The preferred prey of dragons in most cultures are "human virgins" for reasons which are not entirely understood. This trait is very apparent in the Bible as well, where Moses presents Yahweh with 32 Midianite virgins after the Israelite destruction of this tribe. No more is said of them so we can only assume they were "consumed" like Aaron's sons.

12. The Persian Zoroastrians, whom share much reiligous doctrine with Christianity clearly state in their own scriptures (the Denkard), that the "God" of Judaism and Christianity who watched of the Israelites and provided their laws was a dragon, and brother to the dragon Ahriman in their own religion. Interestingly, the storm dragon of Sumeria who flooded the world happened to be brother to the dragon Enki who livied the the garden of Eden and who "tricked" a man named "Adam" out of eternal life.

13. Some Christian gnostics also state Yahweh is a dragon in their scriptures.

14. Jesus stated the Pharisees were worshipping a creature that was NOT his father. Many Christians claim Jesus meant Satan, but this does not make sense, for the Jews clearly worshipped Yahweh and clearly recognized Satan as a distinctly different creature which they definately DID NOT worship. Could Jesus have been referring to the Yahweh dragon? After all he did not call to Yahweh from the cross, but to El. The first paragraphs of the Bible show these are two different entities, for El's creation story is completely different from Yahweh's, far less scientific one.

15. Yahweh is described with literal "wings" in one of the psalms as well as"feathers", as depicted on most of the most acnient dragon wings and this idea lasted until medieval times, after which dragons became less commonly seen, and were given bat like membrane wings to appear more sinister. The dragon character Saphira in Eragon is reminesecent of these ancient dragon depictions

of feathered wings as Yahweh is described in the Bible, and probably inspired the design of this character.

Numerous scholars admit the in the Hebrew Bible it is clear that originally the beliefs were polyestic. there were many Gods, only the Hebrews must worship their own God Yahweh. Later on, the other Gods are called false, and the watcher dragon of the Hebrews, and the Creator God of Genesis were combined into one God, but abundant proof that Yahweh was originally believed to be a dragon, is shown here, and more and more emerges through continuing archaeological discoveries. Swallow your foolish pride and believe the warning of Jesus to the pharisees. Yahweh is a dragon who only works for the real creator El. (He's the one Jesus called to from the cross, not the dragon Yahweh). Look it up yourself, its in your Bible.

Yahweh comes from the Cannanite dragon God Yaw, who is the same "son" of El (Bene Elohim) as Yahweh in the Bible. And they even BOTH have the same dragon god girlfriend Asherah. And they even BOTH have the same sworn enemy Ba'al Haddad. And they even both have wings, breath fire, eat first born children, cause floods, etc. etc. Mere coincidence? I don't think so.

After all, every culture believed in dragons, and most acknowledged they were their gods. The existence of winged reptilian entities kown as dragons today, is perhaps the most universal trait of all human belief systems, though modern Christianity had done its best to "cover up" these facts when they pertain to their own religion. If there is just one thing "real" about gods, religion and an afterlife, dragons are undoubtedly somehow connected to it for they are part of virtually every religion.

Most authoritites seem to agree that the God of the Hebrews was not known as Yahweh until this creature introduced himself as Yahweh to Moses. This is understandable because Abraham came from Ur in Sumeria where this name was unkown. Yahweh gave Moses the name that he was known by in Western Asia, the land of Cannan which Yahweh promised he would give to the Hebrews, and the land where the people knew him by the same name (Yaw), where he was also recognized as a dragon. Thus, in the Bible we see Yahweh with wings, spewing fire from his mouth, given virgins, demanding firstboard children and collecting gold, not to meniton generally behaving in a very ungodlike manner for supposedly being the creator of the universe, though a perfect prototype of the general human conception of a dragon.

This same dragon who flooded the world was known as Enlil in Sumeria, which caused the confusion with the Cannanite name of the dragon's creator, "El" also called Elohim in the Genesis story. Later worshippers of Yahweh would add the second creation story attributed to Yahweh to the original genesis creation of Elohim, further confusing things, and making the Bible seem more mythic than scientific, for the Elohim creation is quite compatible with evolution.

I'm not saying Yahweh is a bad dragon. After all, he let his Hebrew subjects "buy" their first born children back instead of eating them, like the Bible says. It is just that he isn't God. El the creator is, like the first verses in the Bible says. But in their progression to monotheism, the Hebrews melded the Creator, and their tribe's "watcher" dragon, into the same entity. This is why Jesus warned the pharisees that they were not worshipping "His Father", who Jesus called Eloi (Elohim).

having one's throne flanked by fearsome dieities was a popular motiff to emphasize gods, who by this time were no longer considered "dragons" but still had dragon "assistants". Marduk of Babylon has flanking dragons and some pharoah's and Egyptian gods have winged serpents. Even the ark of the covenant was supposed to be the mercy seat/throne of God, flanked by cherubim, which I believe were orignally the same dragons as seraphim.

So is there truth behind any of this? In early christian scenes, the winged serpents and dragons sit next to God in order to devour those that God damns in judgements. In the several scenes that still survive, usually at least one of the monsters is swallowing somebody. Also, the "dragons" are sent to punish humans both in Judaic and Christian lore. So the throne guardian dragons are widespread and trans-cultural, just as the notion of "dragons" devouring the wicked, and although not commonly known to most christians it is prevalent in their early beliefs, as well.

Ironically, this sounds like somehting an "evil wizard" in a fantasy novel would have, which is probably why so many Christians today try to pretend this is not part of their beliefs. But then if we go back even farther, then the "god" is the dragon itself! Although in reality, these dragon gods are usually subservient to a non dragon creator god, such as El is to the Cannanite Yaw and Hebrew Yahweh, and Anu is to Enlil the "Flood" dragon, and Enki the "Eden" dragon..

And even as late as the Neo Bablylonian Empire Enki (now called EA), is carefully described in intimate detail as a reptilian monster, with sharp teeth in a serpentine head, covered in scales and with heel less taloned feet exactly as dinosaurs have though this would have been unknonwn in these ancient times. But because the people were more comfortable with humanoid gods, that looked like them, they believed they could shape shift from their fearsome dragon forms into the shape of humans, so this is why they are depicted both ways.

And this is a world wide belief. Quetzalcoatl could change from a flying serpent monster to a man, Zeus could turn into a huge "swan", "serpent" or "Drakon", so Enki is far from unique. But their original form, and the form they are praised at being becasue of their power in these forms are "dragons", winged serpents, etc. So as we prove again Grem, you do not have a leg to stand on.

Did the dragons really turn into humanoid gods? I doubt it, but humans felt more comfortable believing they did, becasue it made them seem to have more humanity that way.

it was FORBIDDEN for Jews to depiect the real menorah, a rule the romans could ignore. So all of the other menorahs depicted are simply imitations for use in Snynagogues without the IMAGE of the Yahweh dragon. After all, there must be a reason Jews were forbidden to depict the real menorah, and the only plausible reason is becasue its imagery was too sacred.

Josephus claiming that the temple menorah had a single base instead of the tripods seen in many depictions of mere synagogue menorahs. So Josephus is yet more confirmation that the image of the temple menorah on the Arch of Titus is authentic.

Yes, there is nothing like it associatiated with Roman or Greek religion. The fact that there are "dragons" in Greek and Roman art of the period as well, only proves they were apparently seen, or at least believed in by all of these peoples. The leading Jewish scholars all agree that the the menorah from the temple was decorated with dragons. now we must simply ask why, and it would

not be to "please the Romans", becasue no gentile was even allowed in the temple to see it, and it was so sacred that no Jew was allowed to depict it in art. And just as Yahweh orders a fiery flying serpent idol made in the time of Moses, which we know was still worshipped 500 years later, it is not surpising we would see such creatures on the most sacred object after the ark of the covenant. And here again, the Cherubim on the arks were undoubtedly winged dragon guardians as well, since this was a throne chair. And if we go west, we see Egyptian throne chairs with two flanking winged serpents, and if we go east, we see mesopotamian thrones flanked by mushrushu dragons. And right between them and influenced by both cultures are the hebrews, who also mention fiery flying serpents/drakons flanking the throne of God. This was a universal belief, and a real God would be universal, not just revealed to one small tribe of humans, and a study of all the other ancient religions prove this. But the Bible and other ancient texts do confirm that each "tribe" had its own watcher "dragon", that over the centuries would often "morph" into a more humanoid God that many cultures are more comfortable with. In the early days Yahweh is a classic dragon, with a prideful demeanor, having wings, spewing fire from his mouth, and smoke from his nostrils, demanding human and animals as tribute, but willing to accept treasure instead of the first born children each family under his protection "owed" him.

We should not be surprised that modern Jews as well as Christians are somewhat reluctant to admit Yahweh is a dragon, so must come up with the nonsensical notion that Herod "did it to please the Romans", which is ridiculous becasue no Roman would have ever seen the menorah if the temple had not been sacked, the Romans did not worship dragons, and the dragon was not even made into a Roman standard until much later.

There are already archaeologists and scholars who believe Yahweh is derived from Yaw, and it is hard to dispute when we see him subservient to the same Creator God El, both having Asheroth as a consort, both enemies of Baal Haddad, and both called a dragon, and Yahweh with so many dragon characteristics.

Once the Nahashatan idol was destroyed, disaster after disaster befell the followers of Yahweh. It would be naive to think the learned priests could not postulate what I am postulating. When they were released from captivity and returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, they attempted to restore Yahweh's good will by putting his image on the menorah for the dragon idol made by Moses had been destroyed, and this was the HOLIEST possible object, short of making a stand alone, dragon idol, which they may have thought Yahweh would have disapproved of. As for the eagle, eagle - headed Cherubim (or Hayyot) appear in Old Testament scrpture, and the Seraphim "dragons" and Seraphim are grouped together.

The base is not particularly hellenistic. This is a sham to deflect the idea this wasn't created by the Jews themselves to honor Yahweh, who was Yaw, the Cannanite sea dragon. The only thing to connect it with hellenism is the fact that nereids ride similar dragons in their art, and an example came from a seleucid-era temple, but it was not on a lamp base. But by now you should know that dragons are quite universal. Every culture had its dragons and some are remarkably similar not only in physical appearances, but even in behavior, strongly implying they really exist.

Tannin is the word used for the creature that the staff carried by Moses is turned into. But the word is not snake, becasue there are several other words used for snake. And how can it be a whale? Or a Jackal?

As for fiery flying serpents, this is what the word Seraphim means. But modern Christians changed this too, becasue the same fiery flying serpents that are sent by God to punish the Israelites are the same creatures that stand around God, tend his throne and sing praises to him in Isaiah. Early Christians knew the turth, so in early chruch art we see the dragons around the throne, often swallowing up sinners who do not pass heavenly judgment.

And in the KJV, we also have dragons that sing praises to God in Psalms, and this is becasuse the dragons and Seraphim are the same thing although modern Christians have transformed them into swan winged, humanoid, "cartoon angels" the they feel more comfortable with. This is probably why satan is also refered to as serpent and dragon, he was probably one of the Seraphim.

As for the divine council, the article below explains it very sell. And remembrer as well that the Cannanites believed in this IDENTICAL council of gods, led by El, and his FAVORITE son was YAW! And Yaw, (and probably all of the others based on my reasearch), happens to be a DRAGON!

HEBREW HENOTHEISM

For the most update resources on this question, see Mark Smith's The Early History of God (Harper & Row, 1990) and The Triumph of Elohim, ed. Diana V. Edelman (Eerdmans, 1995).

God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment.

– Ps. 82:1

It seems clear enough...that Moses was not a monotheist. Yet, to call him a polytheist seems inaccurate too. We can conclude that Moses stood somewhere between totemism and monotheism. A term to describe this position is henotheism. – H. Keith Beebe1

The Israelite tribes were heirs to a religious tradition which can only have been polytheistic.

– Yehezkel Kaufmann2

The Principle of Theistic Evolution is derived from the fact that some of the world's religions have developed through stages from polytheism to a monotheism. We can see this most clearly in the Vedic tradition were the many gods of the Vedas eventually reduce to the triune deity of Brahman, Vishnu, and Shiva with sectarian trinities found in the worship of Krishna, Shiva, and the Hindu Goddess. (Click here for more.) It is clear, however, that our principle is not a law, for scholars have now noted a theistic devolution in the return to polytheism in the originally monotheistic Zoroastrianism. One of the transitional stages from polytheism to monotheism has been called "henotheism, a situation in which there are many gods but one God prevails as the king of gods or the God of gods. The Vedas contain a form in henotheism with Varuna standing out as the ultimate ruler and judge – the one who infuses grace, forgives and punishes sin.

As a descriptive study in the history of religion, this article makes no judgment about whether monotheism is better than polytheism. Observers of the practice of Hindu polytheism could say that the recognition of many gods leads to greater religious tolerance. Monotheistic gods also tend to be more remote and less accessible to the life of faith. One might also argue that the exclusive worship of one God leads to intolerance of other religions. Just as biological evolution has not necessarily led to the best species, theistic evolution has not necessarily led to the best theology.

The final editors of the Hebrew canon were fervent monotheists, but a remnant of the polytheistic basis of the pre-Mosaic religion can still be detected. Albrecht Alt has shown that divine titles such as 'El Bet' el (Gen. 31:13; 35:7); 'El 'Olam (Gen. 21:33); and 'El Ro'i (Gen. 16:13); 'El 'Elyon (Gen. 14:18); and 'El Saddai (Gen. 17:1); all later taken to be one God (Yahweh) after Moses, were all originally separate gods worshipped by the early Hebrews.3 The Catholic scholar Bruce Vawter concurs with Alt. According to Vawter, none of the available English translations does justice to the original Hebrew of Genesis 31:13, which quite simply reads "I am the god Bethel" ('El Bet'el), who was a member of the Canaanite pantheon along with the rest of the above.4 The original meaning is therefore quite different from the traditional understanding: this god at Bethel is not the universal Lord who appeared at Bethel but just one god among many – a local deity of a specific place.

In the mutual swearing of Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:51f) it is clear that two distinct gods are referred to.5 The work of later editors is clearly evident in this passage. As Alt states: "Was it not plain paganism for the ancestor of Israel and one of his relations to swear by two different gods? This dangerous sentence had to be rendered harmless by an addition or alternation."6 In Judges 11:24 Jepthah recognizes the authority of the god Chemosh, at least for the Ammonites in their own land.

The popular notion that Moses was the original monotheist is a thesis that has very little support. As we shall soon see, Moses probably was not even a monotheist, but even if he was, there was monotheism in Egypt a generation before Moses, most likely under the heretic king Akhenaten of the 14th century B.C.E. In his insistence on the worship of Yahweh alone, Moses was a henotheist, i.e., he believed that Yahweh was the greatest among the gods, the king of gods.

The traditional belief that Yahweh revealed himself solely to Moses, and that no people except the Hebrews worshipped Yahweh, is also becoming more tenuous. Several scholars have pointed out evidence of Yahweh worship among several pre-Mosaic eastern cultures.7 For example, the controversial tablets at Ebla, dating back into the 3rd millennium B.C.E., speak of a god by the name of "Ya," who is linked to the Yahweh of Moses by some Ebla scholars.8

Contrary to popular understanding, the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me," does not deny the existence of other deities. In his commentary on Deuteronomy Anthony Phillips maintains that "there is here no thought of monotheism. The commandment does not seek to repudiate the existence of other gods, but to prevent Israel from having anything to do with them."9 The ontological status of other gods besides Yahweh can be explicitly seen in Deut. 32:8, where we find Yahweh setting the boundaries of nations according to the "number of the sons of

God." The RSV follows the Septuagint text, which has been reinforced by the copy of Deuteronomy found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in Cave 4 at Qumran.

The ninth century Masoretic text replaces "sons of God" with "sons of Israel," which some modern English versions follow. It does look like the Masoretes changed the text so as to avoid dangerous polytheistic implications. Furthermore, "Son of Israel" makes absolutely no sense in Deut. 32:8. The people of Israel were Yahweh's "portion" while the sons of God "were divine beings or angels to whom God had delegated authority over the nations. Their existence is not denied but rather accommodated to the overall authority of Yahweh to whom they are subservient."10 As Anthony Phillips states: "The poet, drawing on Canaanite mythology, identifies Yahweh with the pre-Davidic god 'Elyon."11 As Deut. 32:8 has been taken by some to be a very old passage, Gerald Cooke and others speculate that in the earliest times Yahweh was not the head of the gods, but simply one of the "sons of God" in the sense of b‘n‘ 'Elyon. In Deut. 32:8 Yahweh appears to be different from 'Elyon, because of the definite third person reference, which "easily gives the impression that Yahweh like the sons of God received his portion, allotment from 'Elyon."12

Theodore C. Vriezen explains the advantage of henotheism: "This idea of beings surrounding God by no means detracts from the uniqueness of God; on the contrary, these divine beings rather emphasize his uniqueness; he is the God of gods, their God, too; and they praise his holiness. Far from clashing with monotheism, this conception lays the greatest stress on the majesty of Yahweh. Yahweh is a unique God, but he is not alone."13 Complementing Vriezen's point is the fact that the other deities are never named, except for perhaps the case of Satan in Job.

A divine pluralism can also be seen in the Hebrew word for deity, 'elohîm, which is a plural form of 'Eloah, which is a form of 'El, the general word for God in the Semitic world. There are some scholars who argue that 'elohîm in reference to Yahweh must be a grammatical plurality only. For them 'elohîm is an abstract plural with a singular meaning. Such a grammatical form would emphasize the majesty of the Almighty. In his study of the "Great Isaiah Scroll" at Qumran, William Brownlee of Claremont has shown the radical extent of the use of this "plural of majesty": even Yahweh's quiver (Is. 49:2) and a single hand are in the plural.14

There is, however, a significant exception, noted long ago by the Hebrew grammarian Gensenius. When 'elohim is referred to pronominally, as in "let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26), then the majestic plural is not applicable.15 Furthermore, the priestly writers use singular verbs for the deity in adjacent passages; hence the use of the plural at 1:26 must be for good reason.16 Canaanite parallels show that the head god uses the first person plural in addressing his divine assembly. It is obvious that this passage reveals a henotheistic situation in which Yahweh is consulting with lesser deities around him.

The use of 'elohîm as divine beings definitely separate from Yahweh (e.g., Gen. 6, Ps. 82) proves conclusively that this divine pluralism is not just a grammatical one. Henotheism is seen in the fact that Yahweh is referred to as 'El 'elim (God of gods, Dan. 11:36) or in the use of the definite article ha 'elohîm (the God) for Yahweh, or b‘n‘ 'elohîm (the sons of God) for the other gods (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7).With regard to these divine "sons," Cooke states: "These are not 'sons' of Yahweh in a filial sense...the 'sons of (the) God(s)' are those who are of the realm of the gods, who

partake of divinity."17 Gensenius agrees that b'n' 'elohîm "properly means not sons of god(s), but beings of the class of 'elohîm of 'elim...."18

Some Christian commentators have taken the ontological pluralism of 'elohîm as definite proof of the Trinity. Genesis 18, where three mysterious visitors come to Abraham, has been used to support this view.19 But rather than imposing a Christian view developed two millennia later on the Hebrews, the proper hermeneutic strategy would be to place it in the context of the religions of the ancient Near East.

Theodore Gaster has done just this and discovered that the story has basic similarities with the polytheistic folklore motif of "hospitality rewarded." Gaster explains: "The classic parallel is the tale, told by Ovid and Hyginus of how Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury (i.e., three visitors, as in the biblical narrative), while traveling through Boeotia, came in disguise to Hyrieus, a childless peasant of Tanagra, and in return for his hospitality, granted him the boon of a son.20 This story goes back at least as far as Pindar (518-438 B.C.E.)

Max Weber also contends that the theological basis for Gen. 18 is probably polytheistic: "The grammatical forms in Abraham's address to the divine epiphany of the three men would seem to make it probable that the singular of the address did not preclude the possibility of polytheistic conceptions."21 The trinitarian hypothesis is vitiated by at least four considerations: (1) the triunity of Yahweh is definitely weakened when two of the divine beings depart for Sodom (18:22), and Yahweh and Abraham are left behind negotiating the fate of the Sodomites; (2) it is clear that the divine plurality is more than three, if the other 'elohîm are the deities of the other nations; (3) even if there were only three gods, this is clearly tritheism and not one divine being with three persons; and (4) the persons of the Trinity are definitely not conceived as a divine council with God the Father as the supreme executive.

The 'Elohîm as Angels

The fact that the two divine beings that go to Sodom are called "angels" have led traditional commentators to mitigate the implied polytheism by the qualification that these beings were not true gods, but created angels. This interpretation is discounted by Albright, Weber, Gaster, Speiser, and others.22 The Bible makes a clear distinction between an angel (Heb. malakh; Gk., aggelos) and a god or God ('elohîm; theos). Revelation 19:10 and 22:8,9 are explicit in their injunction that angels are "fellow servants" and not gods that are to be worshipped. The 'elohîm are not created beings because they are with Yahweh from the beginning and are involved in creation itself (Gen. 1:26; Job 38:7). In a letter to me, Brownlee concedes that there is no mention of the creation of angels, but does point out that yahweh saba'ot does mean "Creator of [heavenly] armies." But it is clear, especially in Job, that the Lord's host (=army) is made up of astral deities not angels.23 But the word "creator" here does imply that the beings are created, eliminating an essential divine attribute (at least for philosophical theology). In Vedic hedonism the lesser gods are also many times referred to as created beings. In Job, Satan is one of the subordinate gods, a son of God, and is referred to elsewhere (Is. 14:12) as the "Day Star" (helal) and "son of Dawn" (shahar), both members of the Canaanite pantheon. Scholar Marvin H. Pope states that "these are lesser members of the ancient pagan pantheon who are retained in later monotheistic theology as angels."24

The interchange of God and angels in the Hebrew Scriptures reflect an early conception of the nature of angels before the influx of Persian angelology during and after the Babylonian captivity. For the early Hebrews, an angelic figure was a temporary disguise for Yahweh. "Angels" functioned as mediators across the great difference between Yahweh and mortals.25 Therefore, the "angel" that appears to Hagar (Gen. 16:7); the "angels" at the Oaks of Mamre and Sodom; the "angel" that wrestled with Jacob; and the "angel" that was "commander of the army of the Lord" (Jos. 5:14) are all divine manifestations of either Yahweh or one of the subordinate deities.

This theory of early Hebrew angelology would also preclude a claim that these "men" that appear as Yahweh foreshadow in any way the Incarnation. Outside of Is. 9:6, which has been taken by many as "divinity in might" only, there is no explicit concept of a man-God or a sustained doctrine of the Incarnation in the Hebrew Scriptures. The idea of the man-God most likely inspired by the Greco-Roman state cults and the Hellenistic mystery religions. The idea is not only alien but blasphemous to the Hebrew mind.

The remnants of the original polytheistic base of ancient Judaism are found more often in the nonprophetic works like the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and Job. Psalm 82 is an important text as evidence for Hebraic henotheism. (The following is the RSV translation with Julian Morgenstern's alternative reading for vv. 6-7):

1. (a) God ('elohîm has taken his place in the divine council ('adat'el). (B) In the midst of the gods ('elohîm) he holds judgment:

2. "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

3. Give justice to the weak and fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

5. They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness;

6. I say, "You are gods ('elohîm), sons of the Most High (b‘n‘ 'Elyon), all of you;

7. Nevertheless, you shall die like men, and fall like any prince."

8. "I thought you were gods, Sons of Elyon, all of you;

9. You shall become mortal (temutun) like men, And as one of the sarim shall you fall.]

10. Arise, O God ('elohîm), judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations!

Traditional interpretations of this psalm have insisted that the 'elohîm are really judges and not divine beings. But if the 'adat'el is an assembly of rulers, then 'elohîm in 1(B) would have no meaning. The great Ugaritic scholar Mitchell Dahood has shown that the phrase 'adat'el undoubtedly comes from the Ugaritic 'dt il, which is the "council of El" of Canaanite mythology.26 Ziony Zevit maintains that Ps. 82 is yet another Canaanite hymn that has been Yahwinized and because of that the text, as other Psalms borrowed from Ugarit, manifests corruption and confusion (26a).

Setting the stage in 1939 for the most careful scholarship on this psalm, Julian Morgenstern states that it cannot Abe denied that the fundamental meaning of 'elohîm is "gods," and that only by a long stretch of the imagination and rather devious and uncertain hermeneutics can the meaning "rulers," "kings," or "judges" be ascribed to it".27 The major problem with these latter meanings is that 'elohîm is never used in this way in any other passage. In 1 Sam. 28:13 the "spirit" of the deceased Samuel is called an 'elohîm, but as commentators comment: "The word god here means a being from another [spiritual] world."28 Some take the 'elohîm of Ex. 21:6 and 22:8 as "judges," but reputable Catholic scholars maintain that these messages too reveal an ancient polytheistic residue.29

The most troublesome aspect of Ps. 82 is Yahweh's judgment on the other gods. Following the implications of Deut. 32:8, these 'elohîm must be seen as the gods of the other nations, which obviously in the eyes of Yahweh have not been ruling very well. The Hebrews knew Yahweh as occasionally temperamental, suspicious, and erratic. As Dahood says in regard to Job 4:18, 15:15, "Even his holy ones he distrusts, the heavens are not pure in his sight."30 Yahweh's judgment for the other gods' misadministration is a harsh one: they must die like men. The traditionalists have taken this verse as proof that the 'elohîm cannot possibly be gods. But Morgenstern has shown that the Hebrew verb temutun compares favorably with other passages (e.g., Gen. 2:17; 3:3,4; 2 Sam. 14:14) where the meaning is most clearly "to become mortal." Cooke concurs: "The statement that those who are gods shall nevertheless die like men appears to us to be an undeniable indication of the divine status of those who are so addressed; their (former) immortality is clearly presupposed."31

Other psalms refer to Yahweh's divine council and provide further support for our thesis. The "sons of god" (b‘n‘ 'elim) of Ps. 29:1 are again taken by conservatives as referring to judges or rulers. But Cooke counters that "the reference to divine beings here would seem to be beyond question" and that "it seems highly probable that we are dealing in Ps. 29 with an Israelite adaptation of a Canaanite hymn which has its setting in a polytheistic conception of a divine pantheon."32 Lesser divine beings who are praising the king of gods, are also found in Pss. 68 and 89: "O Kings of the earth, sing, O gods, sing praises to the Lord" (32); and "for who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Whom among the heavenly beings (b‘n‘ 'elim) is like the Lord, a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and terrible above all that are round about him?" Cooke cites an Ugaritic inscription which has the linguistic prototype of b‘n‘ 'elim as comprising the "assembly of the sons of El."33

On our theory, pure monotheism did not come to the Hebrew scriptures until the writings of Deutero-Isaiah, i.e., during and after the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C.E. Indications of monotheism before Deutero-Isaiah must then be the work of later monotheistic editors. We have seen how later scribes did not hesitate to change passages (Deut. 32:8; Gen. 31:53) which had explicit polytheistic implications. It is significant to note that the monotheistic passages in Isaiah (like 45:21, 22; 46:90) come after Cyrus the Great has been named the Lord's Messiah, "anointed one," in 45:1. Cyrus was a Zoroastrian, one who worshipped the single, supreme God Ahura Mazda. Many scholars believe that Zoroastrianism was the world's first truly

monotheistic religion and that Hebrew religion was influenced profoundly by the fact that the new state of Israel was a small province in a great Persian empire.

Let us conclude this chapter on Hebrew henotheism with a quotation from Oesterly: "The final compilation of the Psalter undoubtedly comes from an age when the religion of Israel was fundamentally, and even aggressively, monotheistic. But there survive phrases which imply a polytheistic outlook. While Yahweh is the supreme God, and the only God to receive the highest honors, others are admitted as valid deities, though of lower rank and inferior quality. The position recalls the kathenotheism which appears in many of the hymns of the Rig-Veda."34

As for the use of DRAKONS, this is the word used by ancient Hebrew priests when they were translating Hebrew into to Greek and had to find a suitable equivalent to Seraphim. So you see, there is no question this is what the Bible writers meant. Not swan winged angels, which were a pagan invention of the early Christians based on greco roman demi gods. The real angels in the Bible are identical to normal men. No wings, no halos. The wings were stolen from the description of the Seraphim/Drakons in Isaiah.

All of this is explained in greater detail, as well has rare depictions of dragons as heavenly creatures in Christian art, in my upcoming book, which is now nearly ready.

To my knowledge it never says anything about other animals being substituted for human prey in the Bible. The only substitute mentioned is a more suitable animal to replace a firstborn Ass. It does say that humans can be redeemed for gold and silver though. Maybe you have forgotten the story of Issac. And all of these sacrifices were actually eaten by the Yaw-dragon. They are carefully roasted and seasoned with salt, viscera is discarded. And the aroma smelled delicious, not like a creamatorium. The Bible specifically says Yahweh really consumed the sacrifices.

The highly esteemed Jewish Encyclopedia, composed by learned Hebrew scholars and Jewish rabbis beleieve the Seraphim are reptilian creatures, because of the root seraph, which is ALSO the name of a winged supernatural dragon in ancient Egypt. A creature IS a noun and not a verb. The early Christians completely understood the seraphim were dragons too, as we see in their art, and both ancient Jews and Chritians used the scripture Apocolypse of Baruch that spoke of the heavenly dragons who devoured the wicked. And to remove all doubt as to what the ancient Jews REALLY believed to be true meaning of the Seraphim, was that when this word was translated into greek, they used the word Drakon! You cannot dismiss the authentic archaeologcial evidence.

Actually swan winged angels are far more farfetched than dragons. EVERY human culture acknowledged dragons, and in the earliest eden story complete with Adam, a dragon built the garden of Eden, and a dragon warned Noah of the flood. This "Great Dragon of Heaven" as he is called in his Sumerian hymns, would become known as Yaw to the Cannanites, (who also said he was a dragon) , and ultimately, Yahweh to the Israelites, who clearly was a dragon as well, for Moses was ordered to make his dragon Idol that was worshipped for centuries during the time Judah and Israel flourished.

All of these dragons were subservient to a non-dragon Creator God, Anu in Sumeria, and El to the Cannanites and Israelites. As th article points out, orginally Yahweh and El are seperate entities,

just as Yaw and El are in the Cannanite theology. Lets imagine the world is millions of years old as science tells us, and that at one time , like Genesis say, "great dragons" dwelled on the earth. The human form would not evolve for another 100 million years. So maybe it made since to "enhance" some kind of winged reptile with greater intelligence to be servants, 100 million years before there could be angels in human form (which were recruited humans). This might be why nearly EVERY human culture speaks of intelligent dragons --

They are probably the gretest proof of a supernatural realm. The new testament states even Jesus did not look like a human being before he came to earth.

Nearly all of these cultures believe the Creator God sent dragons to mankind to serve as local Gods to specific tribes. We have the Oriental dragons of course, the Mesoamerican "dragons" like Quetzalcoatl and Kuklakan, and similar creatures in North america, and the Mesopotamian dragons who do the EXACT same things that would later be accredited to the dragon Yahweh.

Distinguished experts in their fields say the early hebrews believed in multiple gods as the article and scriptural states. The 10 Commandmants only say there should be no other God before Yahweh, but does not dismiss other gods. But I agree these are not true Gods. They were the ancient watcher dragon that the Creator put on the earth to supervised the development of human culture. This is why EVERY culture, (including Judaism and early Christianity, UNQUESTIONABLY acknowledge dragons as heavenly creatures. Archaeology proves this, it cannot be disputed. The Zoroastrian Persain empire, and gnostic Christian also understood Yahweh is a dragon.

The Bible may have been accurate at one time, but it no longer is. The article shows how the references to other gods has been changed, just as all the references to the heavenly dragons has been changed in only the past hundred years. In fact, the true reference to the Sons of God and NOT the Sons of Israel, can be found in the DEAD SEA SCROLLS!

The ancient book burners never counted on archaeology to reveal the real truth of the Bible as it was originally intended.

Ancient legends all over the world speak of "dragons" sent by the Creator God to watch over the different human tribes and teach them agriculture, animal husbandry, laws, etc. In return, the human tribe fed the dragon sacrifices, sometimes even including humans as the bible states. Yahweh is the dragon of the Hebrews, and the Old Testament is his story. Jesus knew the dragon was not the real God, and told the pharisees that they were not worshipping his father, but a murderous creature. Jesus did not call to the dragon Yahweh from the cross. He called to Eloi, the the true creator.

It shouldn't be such a big deal to Christians that Yahweh is really a dragon. On the contrary, it explains why Yahweh behaves in such a cruel and ungodlike way throughout the Old Testament, and a logical reason behind animal and human sacrifices..... he ate them.

Levitcus is sometimes called "Yahweh's Cookbook" for all the details on exactly how sacrifices must be prepared. This was evidently important becasue Yahweh consumed two priests who were also sons of Aaron for not "getting it right". Leviticus 6 explains Yahweh liked his meat salted

Levitucus 27: The Lord spoke to Moses, saying:

2Speak to the Israelite people and say to them: When anyone explicitly vows to the Lord the equivalent for a human being, 3the following scale shall apply: If it is a male from twenty to sixty years of age, the equivalent is fifty shekels of silver by the sanctuary weight; 4if it is a female, the equivalent is thirty shekels. 5If the age is from five years to twenty years, the equivalent is twenty shekels for a male and ten shekels for a female. 6If the age is from one month to five years, the equivalent for a male is five shekels of silver, and the equivalent for a female is three shekels of silver. 7If the age is sixty years or over, the equivalent is fifteen shekels in the case of a male and ten shekels for a female. 8But if one cannot afford the equivalent, he shall be presented before the priest, and the priest shall assess him; the priest shall assess him according to what the vower can afford.

Jewish Priests who translated the Hebrew into Greek, because Greek was the intellectual language of of near east at the time. Most of the later Jewish Scriptures are only found in Greek. And in these scriptures we see heavenly dragons, in Baruch they dwell in heaven where they consume the souls of sinners. In the Testament of Solomon, a dragon helps saw the huge stone blocks for the temple.

The earliest eden and flood stories come from Mesopotamia. The dragon Enki warns the first "Noah" by speaking thorgh the walls of his reed house so he will not be frightened. In the Adapa (adam) and the southwind story, the dragon Enki builds the garden of eden. The highe God in heaven Anu, whiches to bestow eternal life on Adam, but Adam catches fish for Enki and does not want to lose him becasue this is actually about Adam being recruited to become an angel. So Enki Tricks Adam into NOT taking the proffered food that will give him immortality.

This story is over 1000 years older than the Hebrew version, but after being an oral tradition so long it was mixed up a bit, the Hebrews did not realize that their Tribal God Enki-Yahweh was actually the serpent (dragon), and it was El the Creator God who did not bestow eternal life on Adam. Bibleorigins is a good website to read of all the more ancient stories that inspired Genesis. But this does not mean the rest of the bible is wrong, it only means thse earliest stories from mesopotamia became distorted over centuries of retelling.

Use a parallell Bible and you will find it says meat in many of them, and all sacrifices in others. But to remove all doubt, here we see goats and bullocks beings salted and literally placed before Yahweh:

Ezekiel 43

22 And on the second day thou shalt offer a he-goat without blemish for a sin-offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse it with the bullock.

Also us a parallel bible and you will see Aarons Sons ARE CONSUMED, as it devoured, though roasted first with a bolt of fire, presumeably from the dragon Yahweh's mouth, as he spews fire from is mouth in Psalms.

23 When thou hast made an end of cleansing it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock without blemish.

24 And thou shalt bring them near before Jehovah, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt-offering unto Jehovah.

A baby cannot work in the temple, and the Bible says both firstborn animals and babies alike are "His" seven days after they are issued from the womb.

The Dead Sea Scrolls PROVE, that the original Deuteronomy stated EACH Sons of God was given a tribe to look after and this has since been changed to eliminate the other Gods. This was detailed in the Henoism article I posted here. You also cannot ignore the far older versions of genesis where a dragon builids Eden, tricks Adam out of eternal life, caused the flood, saved the first Noah, caused the languages at the tower of babel, etc. Abraham came from Ur where these stories were part of the religion. Do you thik this is a coincidence?.

In the early Chrisitan times, some of these books were considered as holy as the ones in the Bible today. But later Popes threw them out. So it is not God you are putting your trust in for the accuracy of scripture, but a human and humans can error. And as we have seen, humans changed the Bible to reflect changing human beliefs. Studying these other books actually gives us more information about the bible. We do not know why Yahweh "sought to kill Moses" in the Bible, or what really happened. But in the accompanying ancient Jewish texts we see that a monstrous reptiles swallows moses head first becasue he forgot to circumcise his Son, and he is only saved when Zipporah circumcises the baby with a shap rock, and the beast spews him out. This was probably in the original bible, becasue it looks like part of the story is missing, but the Bible was changed to cover up the fact there were othe Sons of Gods (dragons) like Yahweh. But they could not change everything, and this is why we see descriptions of Yahweh with wings, spewing fire from his mouth , demandiing children and animals, being given virgins, and having the same name and consort as the cannanite dragon Yaw, and doing all the things in Genesis that were recorded 1000 years credited to the dragon Enki, who many scholars believe became the dragon Yaw, and ultiamtely Yahweh. This does not mean Yahweh is fake, it just means he was known to the Sumerians and Cannanites as a dragon long before he brought the Israelites out of Egypt..... to kill the people of a rival dragon Ba'al, because apparently Yahweh was not allowed to do this himself.

Yaw the cannanite dragon who became Yahweh sometimes dwelled in the Sea, just like Enki the dragon who made the Garden of eden and tricked Adam, all long before the Hebrews recorded the same stories with distortions. Archaologists have even found the original Eden story with the dragon Enki tricking Adam in Egypt , in an archive long before Moses was believed to have led the Israelites out of Egypt.

But Just like Yahweh, and Yaw and Enki/Enlil, the Chinese dragons were also responsible for flooding people when they were angry. And don't forget the original thunderbirds and feathered serpents of America, who were also apparently draogons. The Hebrews were no different than anybody else in their belief in dragon "gods". Moderns Jews and Christians just "pretend" that they didn't.

The Bible states Yahweh (the dragon) actually consumed his sacrifices unlike "false Gods". There was even a "contest" between the priests ofBa'al and Yahweh's prophet.

And the Seraphim Dragons sent to punish the Israelites were very real to them, and when this word was translated to Greek by the ancient Jews themselves, they were called drakons.

The real Bible only confirms what every other culture of ancient times believed..... that dragons were real, and were their earliest gods, and from one corner of the world to the other, they all shared similar characteristics.

It is only modern Christians who have taken the dragons out of the Bible becasue we no longer see them today. Nobody sees swan winged angels either, but this doesn't seem to bother them. In fact, the irony here is the winge heavenly creatures are dragons, as the ancient scriptures prove. The angels in the real bible have no wings, they look exactly like normal men, and essentially are men. They must even eat food in heaven to live, just as Yahweh eats his sacrifices.

The story was found in the Amarna archive in Egypt long before most authorities believe the Exodus could have taken place. So if Moses was the first one this story was ever told to, how could the Egyptians already have a copy. Common sense dictates that Abraham knew these stories because he came from Ur. Not far from the original Garden of Eden next to Eridu. And cultural reasons beside the illiteracy of the early hebrew shepherd-nomads is why the story changed a bit from the Sumerian ones. But this does not mean they are not true. For if the story of Jesus is real, the story of Yahweh the dragon must be real as well, and the best record of the early days, comes from sumeria, where the stories were written down properly, not from the altered acounts of Hebrew shepherds.

Of course there are dragons in the Torah, the Seraphim that punish the Israelites are "dragons" by the ancient Jews own words as I have shown. The ONLY idol Yahweh ever approved was a bronze, fiery flying serpent (aka "dragon"), which we now know was Yahweh's physical form as the Bible proves. We the this idol was worshipped for hundreds of years -- the times the tribes of Israel prospered the most, so obviously Yahweh was pleased. But once the idol was broken, everything goes downhill from that point on. It is a Biblical, and historical fact.

And yes, some of the other ancient dragon gods evolved into a human form over the centuries, just like Yahweh, because after the dragons left, humans were uncomfortable with the fact their ancestors worshipped dragons and fed them their children. So there was a coverup. The bible says Yahweh has wings, breathes fire and his closest associates around his throne are dragons. Even his name comes frome the Cannanite dragon Yaw, you even has the same dragon "girlfriend" as Yahweh - Ishtar-Asheroth! But now, in your edited, sanatized, non-bilbical, Christian mythology, Yahweh is this old guys with a long white beard surrounded by blond haired blue eyed swan winged angels. My facts are from the bible itself, and contradict the modern Christian mythology. Even the early Christian artwork of God surrounded by dragon guardians, and the early scriptures about dragons in heaven prove that later chrstians have created a non-biblical mythology becasue they became uncomfortable with the truth.

The fact that Yahweh is a dragon does not change the message of Jesus. Like I said before, it actually brings more sense to some of the things Jesus says, like the fact that the God worshipped by the Pharisees was not his Father. At least that is what the Bible says.

You should be glad he is a dragon, becasue it would be plain sick if he had all of those slaughtered animals and children simply burnt up for nothing but "symbolism". And the Bible is very clear Yahweh would give you the baby back if you paid him for it. It is that dragon's love of gold.

Oh, and as to Jesus being a dragon, the New Testament says Jesus true form was NOT human. And if we go all the way back to Sumeria, there was another dragon who the creator loved above all the rest. In his hymnns he is called "the Good Shepherd". Hmmmmm, I think I have heard that someplace before..... But he is also called the "great dragon of the earth". But as we see with Yahweh, the Hebrews were His flock. He cared for them, yes. but like any shepherd, he also ate a few of them now and then.

The two dragons who took Adam to heaven in the original Eden story are pictured on a libation vase in the Louvre, and they have long necks, reptilian heads, wings (like Yahweh), clawed feet and a long tail. Just like the modern and medieval and ancient concept of dragons. These dragons guard the gates of heafven too, and are the original Cherubim. In the Hebrew version, instead of taking Adam to heaven, they chase him out of Eden.

The old Testament Angels eat Manna in heaven, and this is a physical substance that the hebrews also eat. This plus the sex thing prove they are biological creatures, but like the heavenly dragons, apparently do not age. And the Nephilim in the Bible are said to be the offspring of angels and human women. I suspect the heavenly dragons (seraphim) also eat this manna, though we see that the ones that come to earth like Yahweh (and many in dragon legends around the world), prefer animals and humans. Virgins seem to be popular dragon fare, and the Bible is not different. Yahweh is given 32 virgins. What you do not understand is that it is not until pagan Greek beliefs contaminated the Bible that we have invisible spirit angels. The Old Testament angels eat food just like the heavenly dragons. Its in the Bible.

That has been said here many times, and actually gives the Biblical yahweh more credence. The Sumerian Gods are also referred to as "dragons" in their hymns. The Sumerian origins do not necesarily make the Biblical account of the dragon Yahweh less real. Enki-Yahweh may have simply "kept in touch" with the group of shepherds that left Ur and headed west. Perhaps the only reason Yahweh was allowed to still "shepherd" a tribe of humans at such a late date was because these were the descendents of his original group in the Ur - Eridu region. It all fits the proper chronology.

A hymn to Enki, "The Great Dragon that stands in Eridu" also mentions his building the Garden of Eden there. This is quite close to where the satellites noted the garden should be by the ancient river courses. (Our ancestors claim a "dragon" taught them agriculure in the garden of eden).

This is the correct translation of an important verse in its original form as found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Most Bibles today ignore it.

“When the Most High (EL) divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds [borders] of the people [peoples, plural], according to the number of the sons of Elohim For the Lord’s [YHWH’s] portion is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”

Deuteronomy 32:8–9

This indicates that each human tribe has a "Son of Eloim" which I believe are the dragon gods recognized in myths all over the world. Yahweh is merely one more of El's "sons" but the one allocated to the people of Jacob (Hebrews).

As I previously mentioned, El's creation story is older and more realistic than Yahweh's which was added later.

This does not mean El is a dragon too. He is the Creator God and probably formless. But most human cultures that recognized the Creator, also recognized dragon assistants to the creator.

Centureis later, when the Hebrews became monotheistic, they morphed the shapeless creator El, with the fire spewing, winged dragon Yahweh to create the modern concept of God, supposedly an all wise creator of the universe, that for some odd reason is infatuatuated with a single tribe of human who he often behaved like a cruel 'dragon' agains, even demanding thier children for offerings and slaughtering them in their hundreds of thousands for disobedience. When you are able to discern Yahweh and El are two different entities, the Bible makes a lot more sense.

Snakes do not have wings. But Isaiah states the Seraphim do. And it is Seraphim that God sends to punish the Israelites, THE SAME CREATURE AS DESCRIBED IN ISAIAH!

Chritians understood this for centuries, becsue there are nuerous pieces of religious art depicting the throre of God surrounded by Seraph dragons as described in Isaiah. And other scripture used by both Jews and Christians such as Encoh I and the Apocolypse of Baruch speak of these creatures in heaven, but now call them Drakons becasue these later texts were written in Greek.

Modern Christians turned the reptilian 'seraphim" into swan-winged, humanoid Christmas card angels becasue of the confusion over the evil dragon Satan. But if that were true, and the Seraphim were humanoid, then these Christma card angels would be flutering about the desert biting Hebrews.

And to remove all doubt, the Egyptians also acknowledged a winged serpent monster called the exact same name, a Seraph!

Okay, here is a scholarly article by a university professor that explains what I have been saying:

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For the most update resources on this question, see Mark Smith's The Early History of God (Harper & Row, 1990) and The Triumph of Elohim, ed. Diana V. Edelman (Eerdmans, 1995). Even more recent is David Penchansky's Twilight of the Gods: Polytheism in the Hebrew Bible (Westminster John Knox, 2005).

God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment.

– Ps. 82:1

It seems clear enough...that Moses was not a monotheist. Yet, to call him a polytheist seems inaccurate too. We can conclude that Moses stood somewhere between totemism and monotheism. A term to describe this position is henotheism. – H. Keith Beebe1

The Israelite tribes were heirs to a religious tradition which can only have been polytheistic.

– Yehezkel Kaufmann2

The Principle of Theistic Evolution is derived from the fact that some of the world's religions have developed through stages from polytheism to a monotheism. We can see this most clearly in the Vedic tradition were the many gods of the Vedas eventually reduce to the triune deity of Brahman, Vishnu, and Shiva with sectarian trinities found in the worship of Krishna, Shiva, and the Hindu Goddess. (Click here for more.) It is clear, however, that our principle is not a law, for scholars have now noted a theistic devolution in the return to polytheism in the originally monotheistic Zoroastrianism. One of the transitional stages from polytheism to monotheism has been called "henotheism, a situation in which there are many gods but one God prevails as the king of gods or the God of gods. The Vedas contain a form in henotheism with Varuna standing out as the ultimate ruler and judge – the one who infuses grace, forgives and punishes sin.

As a descriptive study in the history of religion, this article makes no judgment about whether monotheism is better than polytheism. Observers of the practice of Hindu polytheism could say that the recognition of many gods leads to greater religious tolerance. Monotheistic gods also tend to be more remote and less accessible to the life of faith. One might also argue that the exclusive worship of one God leads to intolerance of other religions. Just as biological evolution has not necessarily led to the best species, theistic evolution has not necessarily led to the best theology.

The final editors of the Hebrew canon were fervent monotheists, but a remnant of the polytheistic basis of the pre-Mosaic religion can still be detected. Albrecht Alt has shown that divine titles such as 'El Bet' el (Gen. 31:13; 35:7); 'El 'Olam (Gen. 21:33); and 'El Ro'i (Gen. 16:13); 'El 'Elyon (Gen. 14:18); and 'El Saddai (Gen. 17:1); all later taken to be one God (Yahweh) after Moses, were all originally separate gods worshipped by the early Hebrews.3 The Catholic scholar Bruce Vawter concurs with Alt. According to Vawter, none of the available English translations does justice to the original Hebrew of Genesis 31:13, which quite simply reads "I am the god Bethel" ('El Bet'el), who was a member of the Canaanite pantheon along with the rest of the above.4 The original meaning is therefore quite different from the traditional understanding: this god at Bethel is not the universal Lord who appeared at Bethel but just one god among many – a local deity of a specific place.

In the mutual swearing of Jacob and Laban (Gen. 31:51f) it is clear that two distinct gods are referred to.5 The work of later editors is clearly evident in this passage. As Alt states: "Was it not plain paganism for the ancestor of Israel and one of his relations to swear by two different gods? This dangerous sentence had to be rendered harmless by an addition or alternation."6 In Judges

11:24 Jepthah recognizes the authority of the god Chemosh, at least for the Ammonites in their own land.

The popular notion that Moses was the original monotheist is a thesis that has very little support. As we shall soon see, Moses probably was not even a monotheist, but even if he was, there was monotheism in Egypt a generation before Moses, most likely under the heretic king Akhenaten of the 14th century B.C.E. In his insistence on the worship of Yahweh alone, Moses was a henotheist, i.e., he believed that Yahweh was the greatest among the gods, the king of gods.

The traditional belief that Yahweh revealed himself solely to Moses, and that no people except the Hebrews worshipped Yahweh, is also becoming more tenuous. Several scholars have pointed out evidence of Yahweh worship among several pre-Mosaic eastern cultures.7 For example, the controversial tablets at Ebla, dating back into the 3rd millennium B.C.E., speak of a god by the name of "Ya," who is linked to the Yahweh of Moses by some Ebla scholars.8

Contrary to popular understanding, the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me," does not deny the existence of other deities. In his commentary on Deuteronomy Anthony Phillips maintains that "there is here no thought of monotheism. The commandment does not seek to repudiate the existence of other gods, but to prevent Israel from having anything to do with them."9 The ontological status of other gods besides Yahweh can be explicitly seen in Deut. 32:8, where we find Yahweh setting the boundaries of nations according to the "number of the sons of God." The RSV follows the Septuagint text, which has been reinforced by the copy of Deuteronomy found among the Dead Sea Scrolls in Cave 4 at Qumran.

The ninth century Masoretic text replaces "sons of God" with "sons of Israel," which some modern English versions follow. It does look like the Masoretes changed the text so as to avoid dangerous polytheistic implications. Furthermore, "Son of Israel" makes absolutely no sense in Deut. 32:8. The people of Israel were Yahweh's "portion" while the sons of God "were divine beings or angels to whom God had delegated authority over the nations. Their existence is not denied but rather accommodated to the overall authority of Yahweh to whom they are subservient."10 As Anthony Phillips states: "The poet, drawing on Canaanite mythology, identifies Yahweh with the pre-Davidic god 'Elyon."11 As Deut. 32:8 has been taken by some to be a very old passage, Gerald Cooke and others speculate that in the earliest times Yahweh was not the head of the gods, but simply one of the "sons of God" in the sense of b‘n‘ 'Elyon. In Deut. 32:8 Yahweh appears to be different from 'Elyon, because of the definite third person reference, which "easily gives the impression that Yahweh like the sons of God received his portion, allotment from 'Elyon."12

Theodore C. Vriezen explains the advantage of henotheism: "This idea of beings surrounding God by no means detracts from the uniqueness of God; on the contrary, these divine beings rather emphasize his uniqueness; he is the God of gods, their God, too; and they praise his holiness. Far from clashing with monotheism, this conception lays the greatest stress on the majesty of Yahweh. Yahweh is a unique God, but he is not alone."13 Complementing Vriezen's point is the fact that the other deities are never named, except for perhaps the case of Satan in Job.

A divine pluralism can also be seen in the Hebrew word for deity, 'elohîm, which is a plural form of 'Eloah, which is a form of 'El, the general word for God in the Semitic world. There are some

scholars who argue that 'elohîm in reference to Yahweh must be a grammatical plurality only. For them 'elohîm is an abstract plural with a singular meaning. Such a grammatical form would emphasize the majesty of the Almighty. In his study of the "Great Isaiah Scroll" at Qumran, William Brownlee of Claremont has shown the radical extent of the use of this "plural of majesty": even Yahweh's quiver (Is. 49:2) and a single hand are in the plural.14

There is, however, a significant exception, noted long ago by the Hebrew grammarian Gensenius. When 'elohim is referred to pronominally, as in "let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26), then the majestic plural is not applicable.15 Furthermore, the priestly writers use singular verbs for the deity in adjacent passages; hence the use of the plural at 1:26 must be for good reason.16 Canaanite parallels show that the head god uses the first person plural in addressing his divine assembly. It is obvious that this passage reveals a henotheistic situation in which Yahweh is consulting with lesser deities around him.

The use of 'elohîm as divine beings definitely separate from Yahweh (e.g., Gen. 6, Ps. 82) proves conclusively that this divine pluralism is not just a grammatical one. Henotheism is seen in the fact that Yahweh is referred to as 'El 'elim (God of gods, Dan. 11:36) or in the use of the definite article ha 'elohîm (the God) for Yahweh, or b‘n‘ 'elohîm (the sons of God) for the other gods (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7).With regard to these divine "sons," Cooke states: "These are not 'sons' of Yahweh in a filial sense...the 'sons of (the) God(s)' are those who are of the realm of the gods, who partake of divinity."17 Gensenius agrees that b‘n‘ 'elohîm "properly means not sons of god(s), but beings of the class of 'elohîm of 'elim...."18

Some Christian commentators have taken the ontological pluralism of 'elohîm as definite proof of the Trinity. Genesis 18, where three mysterious visitors come to Abraham, has been used to support this view.19 But rather than imposing a Christian view developed two millennia later on the Hebrews, the proper hermeneutic strategy would be to place it in the context of the religions of the ancient Near East.

Theodore Gaster has done just this and discovered that the story has basic similarities with the polytheistic folklore motif of "hospitality rewarded." Gaster explains: "The classic parallel is the tale, told by Ovid and Hyginus of how Jupiter, Neptune, and Mercury (i.e., three visitors, as in the biblical narrative), while traveling through Boeotia, came in disguise to Hyrieus, a childless peasant of Tanagra, and in return for his hospitality, granted him the boon of a son.20 This story goes back at least as far as Pindar (518-438 B.C.E.)

Max Weber also contends that the theological basis for Gen. 18 is probably polytheistic: "The grammatical forms in Abraham's address to the divine epiphany of the three men would seem to make it probable that the singular of the address did not preclude the possibility of polytheistic conceptions."21 The trinitarian hypothesis is vitiated by at least four considerations: (1) the triunity of Yahweh is definitely weakened when two of the divine beings depart for Sodom (18:22), and Yahweh and Abraham are left behind negotiating the fate of the Sodomites; (2) it is clear that the divine plurality is more than three, if the other 'elohîm are the deities of the other nations; (3) even if there were only three gods, this is clearly tritheism and not one divine being with three persons;

and (4) the persons of the Trinity are definitely not conceived as a divine council with God the Father as the supreme executive.

The 'Elohîm as Angels

The fact that the two divine beings that go to Sodom are called "angels" have led traditional commentators to mitigate the implied polytheism by the qualification that these beings were not true gods, but created angels. This interpretation is discounted by Albright, Weber, Gaster, Speiser, and others.22 The Bible makes a clear distinction between an angel (Heb. malakh; Gk., aggelos) and a god or God ('elohîm; theos). Revelation 19:10 and 22:8,9 are explicit in their injunction that angels are "fellow servants" and not gods that are to be worshipped. The 'elohîm are not created beings because they are with Yahweh from the beginning and are involved in creation itself (Gen. 1:26; Job 38:7). In a letter to me, Brownlee concedes that there is no mention of the creation of angels, but does point out that yahweh saba'ot does mean "Creator of [heavenly] armies." But it is clear, especially in Job, that the Lord's host (=army) is made up of astral deities not angels.23 But the word "creator" here does imply that the beings are created, eliminating an essential divine attribute (at least for philosophical theology). In Vedic hedonism the lesser gods are also many times referred to as created beings. In Job, Satan is one of the subordinate gods, a son of God, and is referred to elsewhere (Is. 14:12) as the "Day Star" (helal) and "son of Dawn" (shahar), both members of the Canaanite pantheon. Scholar Marvin H. Pope states that "these are lesser members of the ancient pagan pantheon who are retained in later monotheistic theology as angels."24

The interchange of God and angels in the Hebrew Scriptures reflect an early conception of the nature of angels before the influx of Persian angelology during and after the Babylonian captivity. For the early Hebrews, an angelic figure was a temporary disguise for Yahweh. "Angels" functioned as mediators across the great difference between Yahweh and mortals.25 Therefore, the "angel" that appears to Hagar (Gen. 16:7); the "angels" at the Oaks of Mamre and Sodom; the "angel" that wrestled with Jacob; and the "angel" that was "commander of the army of the Lord" (Jos. 5:14) are all divine manifestations of either Yahweh or one of the subordinate deities.

This theory of early Hebrew angelology would also preclude a claim that these "men" that appear as Yahweh foreshadow in any way the Incarnation. Outside of Is. 9:6, which has been taken by many as "divinity in might" only, there is no explicit concept of a man-God or a sustained doctrine of the Incarnation in the Hebrew Scriptures. The idea of the man-God most likely inspired by the Greco-Roman state cults and the Hellenistic mystery religions. The idea is not only alien but blasphemous to the Hebrew mind.

The remnants of the original polytheistic base of ancient Judaism are found more often in the nonprophetic works like the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and Job. Psalm 82 is an important text as evidence for Hebraic henotheism. (The following is the RSV translation with Julian Morgenstern's alternative reading for vv. 6-7):

1. (a) God ('elohîm has taken his place in the divine council ('adat'el). (B) In the midst of the gods ('elohîm) he holds judgment:

2. "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?

3. Give justice to the weak and fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

5. They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness;

6. I say, "You are gods ('elohîm), sons of the Most High (b'n' 'Elyon), all of you;

7. Nevertheless, you shall die like men, and fall like any prince."

8. "I thought you were gods, Sons of Elyon, all of you;

9. You shall become mortal (temutun) like men, And as one of the sarim shall you fall.]

10. Arise, O God ('elohîm), judge the earth; for to thee belong all the nations!

Traditional interpretations of this psalm have insisted that the 'elohîm are really judges and not divine beings. But if the 'adat'el is an assembly of rulers, then 'elohîm in 1(B) would have no meaning. The great Ugaritic scholar Mitchell Dahood has shown that the phrase 'adat'el undoubtedly comes from the Ugaritic 'dt il, which is the "council of El" of Canaanite mythology.26 Ziony Zevit maintains that Ps. 82 is yet another Canaanite hymn that has been Yahwinized and because of that the text, as other Psalms borrowed from Ugarit, manifests corruption and confusion (26a).

Setting the stage in 1939 for the most careful scholarship on this psalm, Julian Morgenstern states that it cannot Abe denied that the fundamental meaning of 'elohîm is "gods," and that only by a long stretch of the imagination and rather devious and uncertain hermeneutics can the meaning "rulers," "kings," or "judges" be ascribed to it".27 The major problem with these latter meanings is that 'elohîm is never used in this way in any other passage. In 1 Sam. 28:13 the "spirit" of the deceased Samuel is called an 'elohîm, but as commentators comment: "The word god here means a being from another [spiritual] world."28 Some take the 'elohîm of Ex. 21:6 and 22:8 as "judges," but reputable Catholic scholars maintain that these messages too reveal an ancient polytheistic residue.29

The most troublesome aspect of Ps. 82 is Yahweh's judgment on the other gods. Following the implications of Deut. 32:8, these 'elohîm must be seen as the gods of the other nations, which obviously in the eyes of Yahweh have not been ruling very well. The Hebrews knew Yahweh as occasionally temperamental, suspicious, and erratic. As Dahood says in regard to Job 4:18, 15:15, "Even his holy ones he distrusts, the heavens are not pure in his sight."30 Yahweh's judgment for the other gods' misadministration is a harsh one: they must die like men. The traditionalists have taken this verse as proof that the 'elohîm cannot possibly be gods. But Morgenstern has shown that the Hebrew verb temutun compares favorably with other passages (e.g., Gen. 2:17; 3:3,4; 2 Sam. 14:14) where the meaning is most clearly "to become mortal." Cooke concurs: "The statement that those who are gods shall nevertheless die like men appears to us to be an undeniable indication of the divine status of those who are so addressed; their (former) immortality is clearly presupposed."31

Other psalms refer to Yahweh's divine council and provide further support for our thesis. The "sons of god" (b'n' 'elim) of Ps. 29:1 are again taken by conservatives as referring to judges or rulers. But Cooke counters that "the reference to divine beings here would seem to be beyond question" and that "it seems highly probable that we are dealing in Ps. 29 with an Israelite adaptation of a Canaanite hymn which has its setting in a polytheistic conception of a divine pantheon."32 Lesser divine beings who are praising the king of gods, are also found in Pss. 68 and 89: "O Kings of the earth, sing, O gods, sing praises to the Lord" (32); and "for who in the skies can be compared to the Lord? Whom among the heavenly beings (b'n' 'elim) is like the Lord, a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and terrible above all that are round about him?" Cooke cites an Ugaritic inscription which has the linguistic prototype of b'n' 'elim as comprising the "assembly of the sons of El."33

On our theory, pure monotheism did not come to the Hebrew scriptures until the writings of Deutero-Isaiah, i.e., during and after the Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C.E. Indications of monotheism before Deutero-Isaiah must then be the work of later monotheistic editors. We have seen how later scribes did not hesitate to change passages (Deut. 32:8; Gen. 31:53) which had explicit polytheistic implications. It is significant to note that the monotheistic passages in Isaiah (like 45:21, 22; 46:90) come after Cyrus the Great has been named the Lord's Messiah, "anointed one," in 45:1. Cyrus was a Zoroastrian, one who worshipped the single, supreme God Ahura Mazda. Many scholars believe that Zoroastrianism was the world's first truly monotheistic religion and that Hebrew religion was influenced profoundly by the fact that the new state of Israel was a small province in a great Persian empire.

Let us conclude this chapter on Hebrew henotheism with a quotation from Oesterly: "The final compilation of the Psalter undoubtedly comes from an age when the religion of Israel was fundamentally, and even aggressively, monotheistic. But there survive phrases which imply a polytheistic outlook. While Yahweh is the supreme God, and the only God to receive the highest honors, others are admitted as valid deities, though of lower rank and inferior quality. The position recalls the kathenotheism which appears in many of the hymns of the Rig-Veda."34

King Solomon decorated his Temple with Cherubims all over it. God fortold through his prophet that the third Temple will be decorated with Palm Trees and Cherubim on the walls/doors and such. AND God commanded that Cherubim (statues/images) be made on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant!!! Cherubim not being a dragon or dragon like type of angel, but a four faces four winged variety that God is enthroned upon. If a dragon, a serpent, or even a seraphim angel is the symbol or emblem preffered by God it's not shown to be so in history for history would suggest that he uses Cherubim as emblems on and around his most Holy made places not a dragon or seraphim. Second, the serpent Moses made is in no way suggested to be a physical appearance representation of God, nor did God ever condone his people worshiping the image. Because God allowed such worship of the serpent as well as all false idols they worshiped from time to time doesn't suggest it was what he wanted, on the contrary he frequently punished Israel for worshiping idols (but he gives us free will). When the image of the serpent was destroyed it was recorded as a good thing, King Hezekiah is praised as being a good King right before it's told he destroyed it and right after it's told he has destroyed it: 2 Ki 18:3 And he [King Hezekiah] did that which was

right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. 2 Ki 18:4 He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan (just like to note the serpent was named, and it wasn't named YHVH). And right after he destroyed it it's written....: 2 Ki 18:7 And the Lord was always with him; he was successful wherever he turned. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him. 8 He overran Philistia as far as Gaza and its border areas, from watch tower to fortified town. Clearly God was pleased with Hezekiah, not angry with him for breaking his image, because the serpent wasn't an image of him. Now, it's true that the serpent made signified Christ, the faith in the statue healing the Israelites symbolizes the faith in Christ that heals and gives life, and the lifting up of the serpent by Moses symbolizes and foretells of Christ's ressurection and rise to his Father in Heaven. But clearly, Jesus was no dragon, but the Son of Man, the Son of the Living God. The sufferings of Israel that would later come to it after the serpent's destruction were due to a confluence of events, mainly the continuance of King after King of both Israel and Judah as well as most of the people continually turning away from God.

Sure I have, probably a dozen times. The only reason the Hebrew Eden story could have a talking serpent is because it is based on the Adape story. Abraham came from Ur, so it is clear the early Hebrews knew the story. This pretty much 'clenches it'.

And Enki must be the serpent dragon, because it it Enki who tricks Adape in the earlier story. Ningishzida and Dumuzi still have a role in the Hebrew version as well, for they become the two Cherubim. And this is more good evidence that the cherubim were orignally dragons, in fact these very two dragons.

The Bible is clear that it was Yahweh, and not men that both stopped up the Jordan and knocked over the walls of Jericho. This too could be handily accomplished by multi-tonned dragons.

The winged dragons are Ningishzida and Dumuzi, who are close associates, even relatives of Enki. They are holding the gates of heaven, symbolized by a serpent cadeuces to denote immortality in heaven. These two are the origin of the Cherubim in the Genesis story, and escort the Sumerian Adam to and from heaven.

This type of winged dragon is almost always portrayed standing next to Marduk the son of Enki. It is probable this was intended to show that Enki, the great dragon of Eridu, was his father.

The mushushu meets all the criteria of the hymn. We also do not know the original words. Perhaps water monster is a better translation that sea monster.

But the bottom line again:

Enki is called, "The Great Dragon who Stands in Eridu"

Enki tricks Adam in the oldest Eden story A talking 'sepent' tricks Adam in the Genesis Eden story.

Enki's relatives are clearly depicted as Dragons. (like Ningishzida)

Enki's son Marduk uses the Mushushu dragon as his most important symbol

When Enki becomes EA, his is STILL described as a scaly, serpent headed creature.

Some scholars suggest EA bcomes Yam, also sometimes believed to be a dragon.

Some scholar suggest Yam/Yaw becomes Yahweh, and indeed there are incredeilby close parallels.

And as I have shown in the OP, there is much that established Yahweh is a dragon deity

Like it or not,

most scholars today recognize that early Judaism was polytheistic, and El and Yahweh (Yaw) were seperate dieties, and the latter was associated with dragons/winged serpents, both in the correct interpretations of the Seraphim and the veneration of the fiery serpent idol. Okay, I will agreee that all of the religions you state have common roots, but they all go back to the Great Dragon of Eridu, Enki, who

Created the Garden of Eden

Made the first man "out of clay".

Tricks Adam out of Eternal Life

Warns the original 'Noah' about the great flood

Caused mankind to adopt numerous languages at the Tower of Babel.

Abraham came from Ur according to the Bible. This is just a few miles from Eridu. This is why Judaism has these stories. I am not saying they are only myths. Every human culture seemed to have these same 'dragons' that were our earliest Gods. The only difference is that modern Judaism, Islam and Christianity simply overlook the fact that the biblical Yahweh is the same dragon god as Enki, who was subservient to the actual Creator who was called Anu in Sumeria and El to the canannites and hebrews.

Because of thier exposure and influence of Persian Zoroastrianism, it was natural that the Jews would want to present Hezakiah's actions in a good light, but just look at the facts.

1. Yahweh Himself ordered what was essentially an idol or graven image to be made by Moses. This is the ONLY idol Yahweh ever approved of, and it just may be bacause it is His likeness, a fire spewing, cattle eating, winged creature (according to Bilbical scripture), with assistants/relatives who are the same type of creatures (Seraphim).

2. Nor was this a mere piece of metal, for Yahweh somehow imbued it with the power to cure those bitten by serpents, therefore while scripture wrote how the idols of false gods were powerless and only things of stone or metal, Yahweh's idol had real power.

3. Yahweh made Solomon the most powerful and prosperous of all the Israelite monarchs, yet it seems probable that it was Solomon who put the idol in the temple, and also honored a canannite fertilitiy diety (also associated with serpents) as the CONSORT of Yahweh. If Yahweh truly was not pleased with the honoring of a female Canannite fertility Goddess (I suspect really just a female

'dragon' that mooched off of the Canannites), why did He honor Solomon so much? In fact, the animosity between Ba'al Hadad and Yahweh, according to canannite scripture seems to be about these two fighting over Asheroth.

Now look what happens after the idol is broken by Hezakiah.

1. The Assyrians invade and capture/destroy nearly EVERY Israelite city.

2. Hezakiah can only 'buy them off' by giving them all of the temple treasury as recorded in the Assyrian annals.

3. Everythin continues to go down hill, the Babylonians conquer the Assyrians but there is no gold left to 'buy off' the Babylonians so they destroy Jerusalem and the temple and deport the leading citizens.

Are you beginning to see a 'pattern'? Everything is GOOD while Yahweh's idol and consort are worshipped, just as in the glory days of Solomon. On the contrary, the moment after the idol of Yahweh was desecrated, the Jews have been a conquered and subjugated people until 1948! And it may be no coincidence that the Holy Menorah from the Arch of Titus, decorated with GRAVEN IMAGES of the Yahweh Dragon, is today an official symbol of the state of Israel. Perhaps Yahweh is pleased again that after 2500 years he is finally being honored again in the manner he requested.

It doesn't matter if the later Biblical writers state that the desecrator of Yahweh's idol, and who brought ruin to the country 'was a good guy'. The historical facts speak for themselves.

1. Many scholars believe Enki was perceived as a dragon (though as a god could shape shift into a human form). The Bilbeorigins article on the Genesis story quotes many of these scholars, and I have posted that information here before. Enki tricks Adam out of eternal life in the Garden of Eden in the Sumerian version. A walking, talking serpent tricks Adam out of eternal life in the Garden of eden in the Bible. Enki is called a Great Serpent dragon in his hymns. Why are you not able to see the connection. All of those scholars quoted in Bibleorigins could. Do I really need to post these sources all again? Even when his name is changed to Ea, hymns still describe one of his forms as a scaly. cl;awed, serrpent headed monster (dragon).

2. Many scholars also connect the cannanite beliefs with the earliest Hebrew beliefs. El is the high God in both theologies. Yam/Yaw is a lower "son of god". This is implied to be the same relationship as El and Yahweh in the bible. I have posted these scholarly articles here before as well. The problem is that later on, when they became monotheistic, the Hebrews morphed the Creator El, and the tribabl god Yahweh (whose descriptions, idol, assistants-seraphim all suggest a serpent-dragon deity), into one god called Yahweh.

Mereological Ontological Arguments and Pantheism (1997) by Graham Oppy

Mereological ontological arguments are--as the name suggests--ontological arguments which draw on the resources of mereology, i.e. the theory of the part-whole relation.[2]

An instance of arguments of this kind is the following:

1. I exist. (Premise, contingent a priori)

2. (Hence) Some--i.e. least one--thing exists. (From 1)

3. Whenever some things exist, there is some thing of which they are all parts. (Premise, from mereology)

4. (Hence) There is exactly one thing of which every thing is a part. (From 2, 3)

5. The unique thing of which every thing is a part is God. (Definition, pantheism)

6. (Hence) God exists. (From 4, 5)

The status of premise 1 is controversial: friends of two-dimensional modal logic (and others) will be reluctant to grant that the proposition that I exist is both contingent and knowable a priori (even by me). Instead, they will insist that all that I know a priori is that the sentence "I exist" expresses some true proposition or other when I token it. But, of course, even that will suffice for the purposes of the argument. Provided that I know a priori that the sentence "I exist" expresses some true singular proposition or other--i.e. some proposition or other which contains an individual--then I have an a priori guarantee that there are some individuals, and so I am entitled to assert 2. Of course, it will remain true that there are some people who refuse to accept 2: consider, for example, those ontological nihilists who think that the proper logical form of every sentence can be given in a feature-placing language.[3] However, many people will be prepared to grant that we can know a priori that there are at least some individuals--and that it enough to sustain interest in our argument to this point.[4]

The status of premise 3 is also controversial: there are various reasons why one might be inclined to reject it. However, it is important to be clear about exactly what the premise says. Note, in particular, that it does not say that, whenever some things exist, there is some thing which is the mereological sum of those things. Rather, what it says is that, whenever some things exist, there is some thing of which all of those things are parts--i.e. the thing completely overlaps each of the parts, but the parts together need not completely overlap the thing. Of course, given the mereological claim about sums, the weaker claim follows: so friends of unrestricted mereological composition will certainly be happy with 3. But one could subscribe to 3 on independent grounds: one might think, for example, that it is just impossible for there to be two things which are not both parts of a single, more-inclusive, thing. Again, there will be people who are not prepared to accept 3. But, for now, it seems reasonable to suppose that there will be lots of people who are quite happy with it. (We shall have more to say about 3 later.)

The inference of 4 from 3 looks distinctly suspicious. Indeed, it seems to have the form of the quantifier-exchange fallacy which moves from [universal][existential] to [existential][universal]. However, we can patch this. What we need to suppose is that we can talk unrestrictedly about every thing. Now, consider all things. If premise 3 is correct, then it does indeed follow that there is some thing of which every thing is a part. (By `part', I mean `proper or improper part' of course.) Moreover, it is then extremely plausible to suggest that there can only be one such thing: in order to deny this, one would need to deny the uniqueness of composition (a course which is possible, but, at least prima facie, quite unattractive). Of course, some people will not be happy with the

claim that we can talk unrestrictedly about every thing. Among the reasons which might be given for this unhappiness, perhaps the most important is the suggestion that unrestricted quantification leads to paradox. However, it is important to bear in mind that we are talking about quantification over individuals here. Whether one supposes that there are finitely many, or countably many, or continuum many, or Beth-2 many, or even proper class many, individuals, it is hard to see how any contradiction can arise from this assumption. Of course, there are other objections which one might make to the totality assumption. However, it again seems reasonable to suppose that there will be lots of people who are quite happy with it. (Once more, we shall return to this assumption later.)

On the basis of the above considerations, it seems reasonable to suggest that there will be lots of people--including lots of people who do not count themselves as having any kinds of religious beliefs--who will be happy with the argument to 4. Or, perhaps better, there will be lots of people--including lots of people who do not count themselves as having any kinds of religious beliefs--who will be prepared to accept the following argument at least as far as 5:

1. I exist. (Premise, contingent a priori)

2. Some things--i.e. at least one--exist. (From 1)

3. If some things exist, then there are some things which are all of the things that exist. (Premise, from the meaning of `all'.)

4. Whenever some things exist, there is some thing of which they are all parts. (Premise, from mereology)

5. There is exactly one thing of which every thing is a part. (From[5] 3, 4)

6. The unique thing of which every thing is a part is God. (Definition, pantheism)

7. Hence God exists. (From 5, 6)

In other words, there will be lots of people who are happy to allow--on more or less a priori grounds--that there is exactly one thing of which every thing is a part. So, for these people, the important question will be whether the thing of which every thing is a part deserves to be called `God'. If this thing does deserve the name, then pantheism is vindicated; if this thing does not deserve the name, then--presumably--pantheism (or, at least, this kind of pantheism) is simply a mistake.[6]

I

Before we can decide whether the thing of which every thing is a part deserves to be called `God', we need to know more about the attributes of this thing. Even if our mereological ontological argument is successful, it doesn't give us much information about the thing of which every thing is a part (nor about its parts). Morevoer, it is clear that opinion here will divide widely according to prior metaphysical conviction.

Consider physicalists--i.e. those who suppose that there is exactly one physical universe, which has none but physical parts. These people will suppose that the thing of which every thing is a part

is the physical universe. (I assume, of course, that these physicalists suppose that there are no non-physical individuals.)

Consider modal realists--i.e. those who suppose that there are many possible worlds.[7] These people will suppose that the thing of which every thing is a part is the mereological sum of the possible worlds. (I assume, of course, that these modal realists suppose that there are no individuals which are not overlapped completely by the sum of possible worlds.)

Consider Platonists--i.e. those who suppose that, amongst the things which there are, there are non-spatio-temporal individuals laid up in Plato's Heaven. These people will suppose that all of these individuals number among the parts of the thing of which every thing is a part.

And so on. Some of these views seem to lead to better candidates for the name `God' than others. However, in order to make progress on this question, we need to think some more about what a decent deserver of that name should be like.

In some respects, the result is bound to be heterodox. However we proceed, we are not going to arrive at a personal creator. But that's as it should be: pantheists--of the kind under consideration here--typically do not suppose that there is a personal creator. Moreover, there are ways of recovering many other parts of religious orthodoxy. Consider the modal realist view mentioned above. Everything that can be done is done by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omnipotent. Everything that can be known is known by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omniscient. Every possible virtue is possessed by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omnibenevolent. (Not quite the traditional sense, of course. After all, every possible vice is also possessed by some part of the thing of which everything is a part--so, in the same kind of sense, this being is omnimalevolent. Moreover, this remains true even if lots of apparently possible evil worlds are deemed impossible.) Every thing is located in the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omnipresent. Provided that one is prepared to allow temporal parts into one's ontology, one can also get a sense in which the thing of which every thing is a part is omnitemporal. And so on. (Perhaps you could even make a case for the claim that the sum of possible worlds is a being than which no greater can be conceived: after all, on this view, there is no greater being to have conceptions of!)

Perhaps it is worth noting that similar points can be made about the physicalist view mentioned above. Everything that is done is done by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omnipotent. Everything is known is known by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omniscient. Every virtue that is possesses is possessed by some part of the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omnibenevolent. (Not quite the traditional sense, of course. After all, every vice that is possessed is also possessed by some part of the thing of which everything is a part--so, in the same kind of sense, this being is omnimalevolent..) Every thing is located in the thing of which every thing is a part--so there is a sense in which this being is omnipresent. And so on. (Perhaps you could even make a case for the claim that the physical world

is a being than which no greater can be conceived: after all, on this view, there is no greater being to have conceptions of!)

These kinds of considerations about the attributes of the thing of which every thing is a part do not speak to the most important issue. Somehow or other, the appropriateness of the application of the name `God' to an object depends upon (i) whether or not it is appropriate to take up typical religious attitudes towards that object; and perhaps also on (ii) whether or not that object could properly be seen as the focus of one of the well-known organised religions. Of course, it isn't easy to say what the typical religious attitudes are: but, amongst them, there should surely be some kind of awe and also some kind of dependence and gratitude. Awe is easy: it is natural to think that our physicalists would be in awe of the physical thing of which all other things are parts. (Such awe may not be mandatory; however, it would surely be widespread.) But if that's all we are talking about--something on the order of an aesthetic response to a spectacular landscape--then it just seems wrong to say that there is anything of religious significance here. In order to deserve the appellation `religious' there must be more: feelings of dependence and gratitude (or other responses on which the machinations of organised religion can get a grip). But there is no reason to think that these responses will be appropriate for the kinds of things of which all other things are parts mentioned above. Indeed, it would just be a mistake to respond to the physical universe--or the sum of possible worlds--with responses that are only appropriately directed towards persons. (There are, of course, senses in which one might have feelings of dependence upon, and gratitude towards, the thing of which every thing is a part, First, dependence: clearly, your continued existence depends upon its continued existence--if it goes out of existence, then so do you. Second, gratitude: given the first point, there is clearly some sense in which you should be grateful that the thing of which every thing is a part has not gone out of existence. Of course, the important point to make is that these are not the `religious' responses to which reference was made above. Even though it is hard to articulate precisely, there is clearly a good sense in which the kinds of dependence and gratitude which it would be appropriate to have are not religious.)

No doubt, the conclusion of this discussion was obvious from the beginning. Even if we are as concessive as we can be about the claim that there is one thing of which every thing is a part, our merological ontological argument is bound to lack probative force. You can call my physicalists `pantheists' if you like--after all, the word can be yours to do with as you please--but it won't follow that these people have religious beliefs (in any ordinary sense of the word `religious belief'). Likewise for our modal realists and Platonists. Of course, it remains at least a doxastic possibility that the thing of which every thing is a part is a being with religious significance--that all depends on what the thing of which every thing is a part turns out to be. But we aren't going to learn anything about this from our ontological argument (or from any other ontological argument either). If our physicalists and modal realists and Platonists are wrong about the nature of the thing of which every thing is a part, then it could turn out that their beliefs about this thing ought to be religious--but, as things stand, there is no reason to think that it is in fact the case that beliefs about the thing of which every thing is a part ought to be religious (in the sense gestured at above).

II

The objection of the previous section might be thought of as a minimal objection to our mereological ontological argument. As we noted, it is certainly possible to contest some of the metaphysical assumptions which the argument requires. However, the argument can be firmly resisted even if all of these assumptions are allowed to stand. Consequently, the sensible thing to do is to adopt this line of resistance, since it costs so little in terms of theoretical commitments.

This approach is consistent with the general approach to ontological arguments which I advocated in my Ontological Arguments and Belief in God.[10] In that book, I developed a taxonomy of six different kinds of ontological arguments, and then suggested that each kind of ontological argument is vulnerable to the same kind of minimal criticism, viz. that the arguments have one reading on which they are invalid, and another reading on which they are question-begging (i.e. require assumptions which non-theists can reasonably reject, at least for all that the ontological arguments in question show).

However, the identification of mereological ontological arguments--given only the briefest of treatments in my book--suggests that this general criticism is not quite right. For, in many cases, ontological arguments will also have a third reading on which they are neither question-begging, nor invalid, but on which the entity whose existence they establish is a being of no religious significance. Consider, for example, the following argument:

1. I conceive of a being than which no greater can be conceived. (Premise)

2. (Hence) A being than which no greater can be conceived exists. (From 1, by a familiar argument which I shan't reproduce here.)

3. (Hence) God exists.

The question to ask about this argument is how to construe expressions of the form "I conceive of X". Clearly, there is a "relational" sense in which a sentence of this form can only be true if X exists; and there is another "non-relational" sense in which a sentence of this form can be true whether or not X exists. If "I conceive of X" is meant to be construed in the latter "non-relational" way, then an opponent of the above ontological argument should insist that the argument is invalid. (I omit further details, since they are not relevant to the point I wish to make here.) On the other hand, if "I conceive of X" is meant to be construed in the former, "relational" way, then the opponent of the argument has a choice: either deny that X exists--which is tantamount to claiming that the argument is question-begging--or else accept that X exists, but deny that X is a being which has any religious significance. (As noted above, in the case in question, our modal realist could claim that the being than which no greater can be conceived is just the mereological sum of all possible worlds, a being which is in no sense a good deserver of the name `God'.)[12]

III

One way of restating the conclusion of our minimal criticism of mereological ontological arguments in section I is that they do not provide an interesting or informative mode of presentation of the being whose existence they purport to establish. There are many metaphysical perspectives from which one can accept the claim that there is a thing which has every thing as a part--but many of these seem to have nothing at all to do with religious belief.

A similar point can be made concerning a debate about the interpretation of St. Anselm's Proslogion. Some people hold that the existence of God is established by the end of Part II; others hold that the existence of God is not established until the end of Part III; and yet others hold that the existence of God is not established until the end of the entire work, or at any rate the end of Part XXIII. However, all agree that the existence of a being than which no greater can be conceived is established by the end of Part II--and they also all agree that the being than which no greater can be conceived is God. So the point of disagreement is just about whether a mode of presentation has been found which makes it clear that the being whose existence has been established is God.

Our discussion of pantheism suggests that there may be some point to this debate--c.f. the dismissive remarks in my book. For--to use the same example again--it might be that our modal realists can agree that there is a unique being than which no greater can be conceived: and, if that is right, then there is reason to think that the existence of God has not been established by the end of Part II. (Of course, theists should agree that the being whose existence is established by the end of Part II is God; but they should not think that the argument will persuade non-theists of the truth of the claim that the sentence `God exists' expresses a truth.) Naturally, there are reasons why one might be sceptical about the claim which I have just made: one might doubt that `greater than' should be cashed out in mereological terms; one might doubt that our modal realists are really entitled to analyse conceivability in terms of possibility; and so on. However, the point I want to make is just this: there will be some people who will (apparently) reasonably think that the argument of Proslogion II is sound, but that the being whose existence it establishes is not a being of any religious significance.

(It is also worth thinking a little more about the expression `being than which no greater can be conceived'. It is at least possible to take this expression to exhibit the same `relational' / `non-relational' ambiguity which was discussed above in connection with the expression `I conceive of X'. In one sense, the greatest being--if there is such--is the being than which no greater can be conceived. For our modal realists, and under plausible assumptions about the mereological nature of greatness, this being is just the sum of possible worlds. So, on the `relational' reading, the being than which no greater can be conceived just is the sum of possible worlds. Since some traditional theistic conceptions talk about `the sum of all possibilities', it is not obvious that we should think that these considerations are entirely irrelevant to traditional theistic argumentation.)

IV

Many people will feel that the minimal criticism of mereological ontological arguments for which I have argued can be supplemented with much stronger criticisms. In particular, there will be many people who will think that premises 3 and 4 of the revised version of the argument will not stand up to scrutiny. So perhaps it will be a good idea to close with a slightly closer look at these premises.

Premise 3 says that if some things exist, then there are some things which are all of the things that exist. Why might one be disposed to reject this claim? Apart from the worries about `total' entities mentioned in the introduction, the most likely suggestion is that considerations from ordinary language suggest that quantification is always restricted quantification: there is no sense to be

made of the suggestion that there can be unrestricted quantification. In my view, one only has to state this claim in order to see how implausible it is. Consider the claim that everything is self-identical. Surely the most natural way to understand the quantifier here is to take it to be unrestricted: absolutely every single thing without exception is identical to itself. But, when we quantify unrestrictedly, we quantify over absolutely all the things there are: and, if we can quantify over all the things there are, then there are some things such that they are all the things there are. (Perhaps my counterargument is question-begging. Too bad. The claim that, if there are some things, then there are some things which are all the things there are strikes me as a very good candidate for a claim which is both analytic and a priori. It is often hard to find good arguments for primitive claims of this sort.)

I suppose that some people will hold that `exists' is ambiguous: it has different senses in different discourses. On this view, to say that chairs and numbers exist will be, strictly speaking, nonsensical. For while according to number discourse, it is analytic that there are numbers, and according to chair discourse, it is analytic that there are chairs, there is no discourse in which one can say that there are both chairs and numbers (and hence in which one can ask whether there are chairs, and whether there are numbers).[14] However, against this kind of Carnapian position, I want to side with Quine: `exists' is univocal, and there is a single language in which all claims about existence can be assessed.[15] Of course, I'm not offering an argument here; rather, I have identified one class of people who will not be disposed to accept Premise 3. As I have already hinted, I think that this view is extreme; moreover, I expect that only something equally extreme will suffice for the rejection of Premise 3.

Premise 4 is--at least prima facie--much more problematic. Premise 4 says that whenever some things exist, there is some thing of which they are all parts. But there seem to be lots of views on which this claim is mistaken. Suppose, for example, that you think that there are non-spatio-temporal individuals (such as numbers). Suppose further that you are not a friend of unrestricted mereological composition. Then it might well seem natural to you to claim that there are lots of pairs of things which are not both parts of some more inclusive thing: e.g. my heart and the number 2. Of course, if you are a friend of unrestricted mereological composition, then you get Premise 4 for free: but, otherwise, it seems that the acceptability of Premise 4 will depend upon prior metaphysical conviction about what there is.[16]

Curiously, the kind of thought which typically motivates opposition to unrestricted mereological composition--namely, that deservers of the appellation `thing' must have some kind of `inner unity' which is not bequeathed by mere mereological composition--is an intuition which is shared by many theists and pantheists. One of the key religious intuitions is that there is--or, indeeed, that there must be--some kind of `inner unity' to things. Consequently, there is some reason to think that Premise 4 of our mereological ontological argument cannot properly be motivated by an appeal to unrestricted mereological composition: the principle of unrestricted mereological composition doesn't capture--and, indeed, is plausibly at odds with--one of the principle intuitions of many theists and pantheists.

Even amongst those who are prepared to accept unrestricted mereological composition, there may be some who are prepared to deny (the standard mereological axiom of) uniqueness of

composition. For instance, there are those who think that there is a relation of constitution which is not mereological in nature: the statue and the lump of clay from which the statue is constituted are distinct, even though they have the same clay-ey parts. However, this example isn't enough to motivate rejection of uniqueness of composition: for, in this example, the relation of constitution is not symmetrical--the clay constitutes the statue, but the statue does not constitute the clay. Consequently, the statue has parts--e.g. the left hand part of the statue and the right hand part of the statue--which the clay does not (remember that we are supposing that the statue is distinct from the clay from which it is constituted). In order to deny uniqueness of composition on these kinds of grounds, one needs to find a case in which the relation of constitution is symmetrical: for then one could hold that there are two distinct entities which have exactly the same parts. It is not easy to think of a plausible example of this, however.

In sum, then: there are various views which will lead one to reject the mereological ontological argument for the existence of the thing of which all things are parts. I doubt that there are arguments which will persuade people who hold these views to change their minds. However, there are also many people who will accept the argument for the existence of the thing of which all things are parts. Some of these people will be pantheists--but if they are, it will be for reasons which the mereological ontological argument does not make apparent.

Appendix: Dessert

Many formulations of mereology include the null part--i.e. the thing which is part of every thing. (The inclusion of the null part bestows a nice symmetry on the resulting theory.) This fact provides the means to include a discussion of `the devil' in our theory--provided, of course, that we are prepared to identify `the devil' with the null part. Of couse, this suggestion doesn't make much sense from the standpoint of orthodox theism--the devil is not merely the contrary or opposite of God--but it is important to remember that pantheism already stands at a considerable remove from orthodoxy. Moreover, we can see that `the devil' will have lots of interesting properties once the identification with the null part is made. (For instance, since `the devil' is part of every thing, there is a good sense in which `the devil' is omnipresent. Moreover--as noted above--`the devil' turns out to be the exact opposite--the dual--of the thing of which every thing is a part. Given the attitudes which the pantheist supposes are appropriate for the thing of which every thing is a part, it seems natural to think that the pantheist will suppose that contrary attitudes are appropriate for `the devil'. And so on.)

As I mentioned above, not all mereologists accept the existence of the null part. Those who do not, and who provide reasons for rejecting the null part, can be taken to be providing reasons for rejecting `the devil' (under the proposed identification). However, I shan't bother to labour this point here.

Godelian Ontological Arguments (1996) by Graham Oppy

There is now a considerable secondary literature on Godel's ontological arguments; in particular, interested readers should consult Sobel (1987), Anderson (1990) and Adams (1995). In this note, I wish to draw attention to an objection to these arguments which has hitherto gone unnoticed.

This objection does not depend upon fine details of the formulation of the arguments; I arbitrarily choose to develop the objection in connection with the formulation provided by Anderson.

In brief, the argument I shall consider may be summarised thus:

Definition 1: x is God-like iff x has as essential properties those and only those properties which are positive.

Definition 2: A is an essence of x iff for every property B, x has B necessarily iff A entails B

Definition 3: x necessarily exists iff every essence of x is necessarily exemplified.

Axiom 1: If a property is positive, then its negation is not positive.

Axiom 2: Any property entailed by [= strictly implied by] a positive property is positive.

Axiom 3: The property of being God-like is positive.

Axiom 4: If a property is positive, then it is necessarily positive.

Axiom 5: Necessary existence is positive.

Theorem 1: If a property is positive, then it is consistent [=possibly exemplified].

Corollary 1: The property of being God-like is consistent.

Theorem 2: If something is God-like, then the property of being God-like is an essence of that thing.

Theorem 3: Necessarily, the property of being God-like is exemplified.

Given a sufficiently generous conception of properties, and granted the acceptability of the underlying modal logic, the theorems listed to follow from the axioms. (So say Godel, Dana Scott, Sobel, Anderson, and Adams. Who am I to disagree?) Perhaps one might object to the conception of properties and/or the modal logic. But one doesn't need to: the proof is demonstrably no good even if these things are accepted.

The problem--as with virtually all ontological arguments known to me--lies in the fact that there are parallel arguments which can be constructed, which seem no less acceptable to atheists and agnostics, but whose acceptance leads to absurd results.[1] A template for constructing the parallel arguments is as follows:

Definition 1*: x is God*-like iff x has as essential properties those and only those properties which are positive, except for P1,..., Pn.

Definition 2: A is an essence of x iff for every property B, x has B necessarily iff A entails B

Definition 3: x necessarily exists iff every essence of x is necessarily exemplified.

Axiom 1: If a property is positive, then its negation is not positive.

Axiom 2: Any property entailed by [= strictly implied by] a positive property is positive.

Axiom 3*: The property of being God*-like is positive.

Axiom 4: If a property is positive, then it is necessarily positive.

Axiom 5*: Necessary existence is positive, and distinct from each of P1,..., Pn.

Theorem 1: If a property is positive, then it is consistent [=possibly exemplified].

Corollary 1: The property of being God*-like is consistent.

Theorem 2: If something is God*-like, then the property of being God*-like is an essence of that thing.

Theorem 3: Necessarily, the property of being God*-like is exemplified.

So: for each collection of positive properties which includes necessary existence, there is a being which has exacly those positive properties, and which has no other positive properties. Even if there are only N+1 positive properties, this gives us 2N distinct necesarily existent beings. Not good. (Perhaps N isn't finite. If so, things are even worse.)

In order to rule out the parallel argument, one might take the view that any collection of positive properties which includes necessary existence entails each of the other positive properties--i.e. that anything which has some of the positive properties including necessary existence must have them all. This is a very strong assumption: it requires that each of the positive properties in entailed by necessary existence alone, and hence rules out the existence of any necessary beings other than one which has all the positive properties. Those who are inclined to think that numbers and/or other abstracta are necessary existents will not find this acceptable. And, in any case, there is still a problem of implementation. Suppose we add the following axiom to our original collection:

Axiom 6: Nothing which has some positive properties including necessary existence fails to be God-like

Then it seems that there is a different kind of disturbing parallel argument which can be generated. Let ** be some proper subset of the positive properties which includes necessary existence; say that a property is positive** just in case it belongs to this collection. Then our template for constructing parallel arguments is as follows:

Definition 1**: x is God**-like iff x has as essential properties those and only those properties which are positive**.

Definition 2: A is an essence of x iff for every property B, x has B necessarily iff A entails B

Definition 3: x necessarily exists iff every essence of x is necessarily exemplified.

Axiom 1**: If a property is positive**, then its negation is not positive**.

Axiom 2**: Any property entailed by [= strictly implied by] a positive** property is positive**.

Axiom 3**: The property of being God**-like is positive**.

Axiom 4**: If a property is positive**, then it is necessarily positive**.

Axiom 5**: Necessary existence is positive**.

Axiom6**: Nothing which has some positive** properties including necessary existence fails to be God**-like

Theorem 1**: If a property is positive**, then it is consistent [=possibly exemplified].

Corollary 1**: The property of being God**-like is consistent.

Theorem 2**: If something is God**-like, then the property of being God**-like is an essence of that thing.

Theorem 3**: Necessarily, the property of being God**-like is exemplified

Of course, defenders of the original argument will object that Axiom 6** is false: nothing which is God-like is God**-like, even though anything which is God-like has some positive** properties including necessary existence. But I can't see any reason why opponents of the original argument should be disposed to see any merit in this objection--for it relies on the assumption that there is something which is God-like, i.e. it relies on the conclusion which the original argument was supposed to demonstrate. If there is nothing which is God-like then--at least for all that has been said so far--it might be that there is something which is God**-like; i.e. it might be that Axiom 6** is true, while Axiom 6 is false. So it seems that atheistic and agnostic opponents of the argument can say this: there are 2N arguments for incompatible beings, none of which provides any more reason for acceptance of its conclusion than the others. In these circumstances, it is reasonable for atheists and agnostics to reject all of the arguments; so, the original ontological argument fails.

At this point, I am inclined to draw the conclusion that the defender of the original argument is playing a losing hand. Perhaps I am wrong about this; but I do not think that I will be alone in thinking that there are no prospects for the production of a Godelian ontological argument which does not admit of these kinds of damaging parallels. (Why should atheists and agnostics think that the collection of positive properties is more likely to be exemplified than the collection of positive** properties? Why should they think that any such collection of properties is exemplified?)

Suppose that my conjecture is correct. Then it seems to me that we can conclude that there is more wrong with the original Godelian ontological arguments than anyone has hitherto suggested. One might, e.g., worry whether a God-like being would have the attributes traditionally ascribed to God (Adams); or perhaps one might insist that it is clear that a God-like being could not have the attributes traditionally ascribed to God (Sobel); or ... . But, if I am right, these sorts of considerations must be comparatively unimportant: the possibility of producing the kinds of parallels which I have offered shows (at least) that reasonable atheists and agnostics have good reason not to be persuaded by Godelian ontological arguments even before those other (comparatively unimportant) considerations are introduced.

Of course, there is still the question of pin-pointing the error(s) in the Godelian arguments: the production of damaging parallels may show that there is something wrong, but it does not

constructively identify the error(s). I guess that reasonable atheists and agnostics are bound to say that one of the axioms is (likely) false.[2] One obvious candidate is Axiom 5: granted the rest of the theoretical machinery, reasonable atheists and agnostics may (perhaps should) say that necessary existence is positive only if it is exemplified. If this is denied--i.e. if it is granted that necessary existence is positive whether or not it is exemplified, then another obvious candidate is Axiom 3: granted the rest of the theoretical machinery (including Axiom 5), atheists and agnostics may (perhaps should) say that the property of being God-like is positive only if it is exemplified. Either way, it will then be clear why the argument fails to convince: one will only think that the proof constitutes a sound argument if one is antecedently convinced of the truth of its conclusion. (Moreover--though I shan't try to argue for this claim here--it seems to me that once it is conceded that the argument does not constitute a proof which ought to persuade atheists and agnostics of the truth of its conclusion, then it is conceded that the argument is utterly worthless. It has all and only the virtues of this (classical) argument: "Either 2+2=5 or God exists; It is not the case that 2+2=5; Therefore God exists"--an argument which all theists should think is sound--at least granted the stipulation that the logical connectives are all to be interpretted classically--but which has no other virtues whatsoever.[3])

No Case for Agnosticism by Yannick Lacroix

"Agnosticism is not a third position. It is the evasion of a position" - Nathaniel Branden, The Psychology of Self-Esteem

People often say that atheism[1] is a belief in the same way that theism is a belief. According to this view, insofar as we cannot demonstrate the nonexistence of God, the claim that he does not exist represents some kind of negative "leap of faith," an undemonstrable proposition akin to religious belief. Hence, agnosticism[2] is the only true rational position with regard to the existence of "God." Therefore, as it stands outside the scope of our possibilities of knowing, it would be rationally illegitimate to choose clearly between theism and atheism. As Husserl[3] would say, we have to put God in Epochè. This view is quite popular amongst intellectuals, even some of those who adopt a naturalistic worldview.

The purpose of this article is to show that, insofar as we share a naturalistic (scientific) worldview, this agnosticism is unfounded. It implicitly assumes that the monotheistic idea of God has a special and unique status which preserves it from normal, rational inquiry. I therefore ask a very simple question: why, exactly? I want to show that as long as no good reason is given, we are rationally justified in choosing atheism. In my view, agnostics have to prove that this special status given to the idea of God (and no other) is rationally founded, and is not simply the expression of historical and cultural bias.

Asking this question in a complete and systematic way is the focus of this article. I have invented no stunning argument, but I believe that if it is correctly construed, this question actually becomes a problem that agnostics must resolve. Here is how I proceed.

First, I define rational attitude. This definition, of course, will be purely operational: I am addressing myself to those who already recognize a similar definition. To demonstrate its validity, some kind of universally accepted superconception of knowledge would be needed, from which it

could be derived logically. I think this cannot be done, but I also think that people who reject this definition fail to understand the way in which valid knowledge is actually produced.

Second, I suggest that this conception of rationality leads not to agnosticism but to atheism. The most prudent way of putting this would probably be to say that rationality opens to religion a space of justification that is too limited to be satisfying because it could also be used to justify almost any belief. To my knowledge the only truly valid argument in favor of agnosticism is that we cannot demonstrate the nonexistence of God. Insofar as we cannot demonstrate the nonexistence of Russell's Great Teapot either, I believe this argument is simply too weak to justify agnosticism by itself. Hence my question: Is there anything else that speaks in favor of agnosticism?

My question goes like this:

1) Recognizing the validity of a scientific conception of rationality that is derived from the basic consensus between pertinent epistemologists (logical empiricism, Popper, Kunh, Laudan, etc.), which conception implies that:

a) we adopt, on the question of the justification of our beliefs, a skeptical attitude which views even scientific knowledge as a rational construction which does not satisfy the traditional conception of truth as the perfect correspondence between thought and things (this conception being inapplicable to human knowledge);

b) scientific theories are selected (that is, are allowed to enter the body of science and become common knowledge) not on the basis of their truth but because they are the strongest, that is, the most plausible and justified for the time being (some of their implications can be verified at least in principle; they explain phenomena which, up to that point, were enigmas; they resolve more problems than their competitors; they simplify and define the frame of further research in a given field; they allow predictions; etc.);

c) scientific rationality is the unique source of valid knowledge of the exterior world;

d) other fields of thought (as philosophy) must therefore be at least congruent with scientific rationality in the sense that they cannot contradict the results, the method and the spirit of scientific research, the superior validity of which is evident, if not demonstrable per se, in view of its numerous applications;

e) we can deduce a definition of a rational attitude as the fact of accepting the validity of a given hypothesis (scientific or other) only if is strongly justified by facts or arguments, in other words if it as a satisfying weight in the balance (we have good reasons to believe it might be correct and no good reason for rejecting it);

f) we are justified to reject weak hypotheses insofar as the weeding of ideas is an important condition of the progress of human knowledge;

2) distinguishing between the possibility of some form or other of transcendence, which we can say nothing about but cannot discard as an absurd idea, AND the hypothesis of a monotheistic God which is a particular explanation of man and the universe, the formulation of which can be traced to the Bronze Age;

3) recognizing that this particular hypothesis has no satisfying rational justification because:

a) it brutally contradicts the basic method of science by explaining natural phenomena with something other than natural phenomena;

b) it is useless because it adds no supplementary layer of explanation to existing scientific models which already account for natural phenomena (for example, astrophysical phenomena gain no superior intelligibility by the supposition that God initiated the Big Bang);

c) the arguments in its favor are systematically counterbalanced by stronger arguments produced by scientific rationality (I give two examples: the need for hope is better explained by psychology than by the idea of a religious intuition; the improbability of complex natural orders and systems is better explained by evolutionary theory than by the postulation of a supernatural creator);

d) it is highly suspect of being a cultural invention because of what we know about psychology (for example, the projection of the father figure, or the need for an ultimate foundation of our moral beliefs) and history (the voting of various dogmas and attributes of God by assemblies of bishops);

4) Why, then, should a rational attitude be condemned to agnosticism and not be allowed to choose atheism, considering that the space of justification for monotheistic religion is extremely limited and unsatisfying (we cannot prove the nonexistence of God),

a) considering we cannot prove either the nonexistence of most human fantasies (fairies, dragons, planet-gods and the like);

b) but that we nevertheless, with good reason, have for long eliminated them from the reservoir of knowledge?

In short, I think that the weight of demonstration is not on the atheist's shoulders but on those of the agnostic. Atheism is not a belief, rather it is the absence of a belief, and it is beliefs which need to be justified. This is, in fact, basic common sense. We proceed this way in our everyday life.

If, for example, my girlfriend is twenty minutes late for a rendezvous and my friend suggests she has been kidnapped, I will not base my future actions on my friend's suggestion--even if it is a possibility which cannot at present be eliminated. I will not be agnostic towards the possibility, rather I will reject it and laugh about it because I have, for the moment, no good reason to believe that this unlikely possibility has a significant weight in the balance. What would be the sense of my friend noting that I have a belief that my girlfriend has not been kidnapped and then asking me to prove that I am right?

In my view, the idea of God places us in a similar situation. If this is not the case, agnostics need to demonstrate why.

An Argument against Agnosticism – Paul Draper (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

"The topic in section 4 was Le Poidevin's argument for the truth of a modest form of agnosticism. In this section, an argument for the falsity of a more ambitious form of agnosticism will be

examined. Because the sort of agnosticism addressed in this section is more ambitious than the sort defended by Le Poidevin, it is conceivable that both arguments succeed in establishing their conclusions. In Le Poidevin's argument, the term "agnosticism" refers to the position that neither versatile theism nor global atheism is known to be true. In this section, "agnosticism" refers to the position that neither the belief that omni-theism is true nor the belief that it is false is rationally permissible. This form of agnosticism is more ambitious because knowledge is stronger (in the logical sense) than rational permissibility: it can be rationally permissible to believe propositions that are not known to be true, but a proposition cannot be known to be true by someone who is not rationally permitted to believe it. Thus, an appropriate name for this form of agnosticism is "strong agnosticism". Another difference concerns the object of the two forms of agnosticism. The agnosticism in Le Poidevin's argument concerned versatile theism versus global atheism. In this section, the target is omni-theism versus the local atheistic position that omni-theism is false. The previous section focused on two arguments for the conclusion that this form of local atheism is very probably true. In this section, the question is whether or not that conclusion, if established, could ground a successful argument against strong agnosticism." ref

Such an argument can be formulated as follows:

(1)Atheism (understood here as the denial of omni-theism) is very probably true.

(2)If atheism is very probably true, then atheistic belief is rationally permissible.

It follows from (1) and (2) that

(3)Atheistic belief is rationally permissible.

(4)If strong agnosticism (about omni-theism) is true (that is, if withholding judgment about the truth or falsity of omni-theism is rationally required), then atheistic belief is not rationally permissible.

It follows from (3) and (4) that

(5)Strong agnosticism (about omni-theism) is false.

Premise (1) was defended in section 6, premise (4) is true by the definition of "strong agnosticism", and steps (3) and (5) follow from earlier steps by modus ponens and modus tollens, respectively. This leaves premise (2), the premise that, if atheism is very probably true, then atheistic belief is rationally permissible." ref

"One might attempt to defend this premise by claiming that the probabilities in premise (2) are rational credences and hence the truth of the so-called Lockean thesis (Foley 1992) justifies (2):

It is rational for a person S to believe a proposition P if and only if it is rational for S's credence in P to be sufficiently high to make S's attitude towards P one of belief." ref

"The Lockean thesis, however, is itself in need of justification. Fortunately, though, nothing so strong as the Lockean thesis is needed to defend premise (2). For one thing, all the defender of (2) needs is an "if", not an "if and only if". Also, the defender of (2) need not equate, as the Lockean

thesis does, the attitude of belief with having a high credence. Thus, all that is required is the following more modest thesis (call it "T"):

(T)If it is rationally permissible for S's credence in a proposition P to be (very) high, then it is rationally permissible for S to believe P.

Even this more modest thesis, however, is controversial, because adopting it commits one to the position that rational (i.e., rationally permissible) belief is not closed under conjunction. In other words, it commits one to the position that it is possible for each of a number of beliefs to be rational even though the additional belief that those beliefs are all true is not rational."

"To see why this is so, imagine that a million lottery tickets have been sold. Each player purchased only a single ticket, and exactly one of the players is certain to win. Now imagine further that an informed observer has a distinct belief about each of the million individual players that that particular player will lose. According to thesis T, each of those million beliefs is rational. For example, if Sue is one of the players, then according to T the observer's belief that Sue will lose is rational because it is rational for the observer to have a (very) high credence in the proposition that Sue will lose. Since, however, it is certain that someone will win, it is also rational for the observer to believe that some player will win. It is not rational, however, to have contradictory beliefs, so it is not rational for the observer to believe that no player will win. This implies, however, that rational belief is not closed under conjunction, for the proposition that no player will win just is the conjunction of all of the propositions that say of some individual player that they will lose."

"Defenders of premise (2) will claim, very plausibly, that the implication of T that rational belief is not closed under conjunction is completely innocuous. Isn't it obvious, for example, that it would not be rational for a fallible human being to believe that all of their many beliefs are true, even if each of those beliefs were rational? Others, however, regard the conclusion that rational belief is not closed under conjunction as unacceptable and will for that reason reject premise (2). So even if it can be shown that omni-theism is very probably false, it still won't be obvious to everyone that it is rationally permissible to be a local atheist about omni-theism and thus it still won't be obvious to everyone that strong agnosticism about omni-theism is false."

The Problem of Evil by J. L. Mackie

(a) Survey of the Problem

We have examined various arguments for theism. We have found none that is conclusive, nor, indeed, any that has much weight, though we have still to consider whether the cumulative effect of a number of arguments, each quite weak in itself, is to constitute some presumption in favour of theism. Those who are skeptical about traditional religious doctrines can resist all the assaults of the believers; but they need not limit themselves to resistance: they can go over to counter-attack. Such a counter-attack will naturally start with the posing of the problem of evil. This problem seems to show not merely that traditional theism lacks rational support, but rather that it is positively irrational, in that some of its central doctrines are, as a set, inconsistent with one another. According to traditional theism, there is a god who is both omnipotent (and omniscient)

and wholly good, and yet there is evil in the world. How can this be? It is true that there is no explicit contradiction between the statements that there is an omnipotent and wholly good god and that there is evil. But if we add the at least initially plausible premisses that good is opposed to evil in such a way that a being who is wholly good eliminates evil as far as he can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent being can do, then we do have a contradiction. A wholly good omnipotent being would eliminate evil completely; if there really are evils, then there cannot be any such being.

The problem of evil, in the sense in which I am using this phrase, is essentially a logical problem: it sets the theist the task of clarifying and if possible reconciling the several beliefs which he holds. It is not a scientific problem that might be solved by further discoveries, nor a practical problem that might be solved by a decision or an action. And the problem in this sense signally does not arise for those whose views of the world are markedly different from traditional theism. It is plain, therefore, that this problem can be easily solved if one gives up at least one of the propositions that constitute it. Someone who holds that there is in some sense a god, but one who is not wholly good, or, though powerful, not quite omnipotent, will not be embarrassed by this difficulty. 1 Equally, someone who holds that nothing is really evil in the sense in which evil is opposed to the sort of goodness he ascribes to his god, is not faced with this problem, though he may have difficulty in explaining the point of his use of the words 'good' and 'evil', and in saying how it is related to more common uses. Theists who are not prepared to take any of these drastic steps have, nevertheless, tried to solve the problem. The possibility of a solution lies in the fact that either or both of the additional premisses suggested above may be modified:

the opposition between good and evil may be construed in such a way that a wholly good god would not, after all, eliminate evil as far as he could, and (whether this is so or not) it may be argued that there are limits--and limits that matter in this context--to what even an omnipotent being can do.

For example, it would usually be said that God cannot do what is logically impossible; and this, we can agree, would be no real departure from omnipotence. Then it may be suggested that good cannot exist without evil, that evil is necessary as a counterpart to good. If this counterpart relationship is logically necessary, then a wholly good being would presumably not eliminate evil completely, even if he could do so, since this would logically require the disappearance of goodness also, including, presumably, his own. However, the contrast principle that is being invoked here is very dubious. It is plausible enough to say that if some quality or property were strictly universal, that is, if everything whatever had the property and nothing lacked it, then there would be no need in any language for a predicate that picked out that property; it is also fairly plausible, though not fully persuasive, to say that if a property were thus universal no one would notice it. But it is not at all plausible to say that if there were nothing that lacked a property, the property itself would not exist, that by being everywhere it would somehow cease to be anywhere. And even if we granted this implausible principle-and, further, neglected the possibility of things' being neither good nor evil--and so admitted that a wholly good god, limited only by logical impossibilities, would have a sufficient reason for not eliminating evil completely, this would explain, compatibly with theistic doctrines, the occurrence of only a minute quantum of evil, just

enough to satisfy this odd metaphysical principle and so permit the continuance in existence of the otherwise pervasive goodness of creation and its creator. But it is not in this sense that theists traditionally hold that there are evils in the world: they are not content to regard whatever things they take to be wrong or bad as a minute, necessary, and indeed welcome contrast to goodness which would otherwise efface itself. Popular theodicies, that is, attempts to justify God in the face of the widespread occurrence of what are at the same time held to be evils, make far more use of the notion that evil is often necessary as a means to good. Of course this way of thinking is entirely natural for human agents in the ordinary circumstances of life. It may well be that children can develop into responsible self-governing adults only by being allowed to make mistakes and to learn from them. Parents, teachers, and statesmen, among others, constantly use, or permit, as means to what they see as good, things which, considered on their own, they regret or deplore. Any sensible person may be ready, though he regards pain in itself as an evil, to put up with painful medical treatment if he is convinced that it is necessary as a means to a lasting improvement in his health, or to endure toil that is in itself undesirable for the sake of commensurate rewards. Also, taking a wider view, it is reasonable to say that though pain, as experienced by animals of many kinds, is bad in itself, it performs a useful warning function: it directs the animal away from what would cause greater injury or death. Even pain which does not itself serve this useful purpose is in general causally connected with that which is beneficial: it would be hardly possible for animals to have nervous systems of the sorts that enable them to be guided by pain away from sources of harm without thereby being liable sometimes to suffer pain that, on these particular occasions, brings no good results. Such truths as these are familiar and obvious; but they are also totally irrelevant. For since they all concern causal relationships, in which something counted as evil is seen to be causally necessary as a means to, or as a result or accompaniment of, something that can be seen as a greater, counterbalancing, good, they explain only why agents whose power is limited by independently existing causal laws may reasonably put up with evil for the sake of the associated good.

But God, by hypothesis, is not such an agent. If omnipotence means anything at all, it means power over causal laws. If there is an omnipotent creator, then if there are any causal laws he must have made them, and if he is still omnipotent he must be able to override them. If there is a god, then, he does not need to use means to attain his ends. So it is idle to refer, in a theodicy, to any ordinary, factual, means-end, or in general causal, relationships. One would think that so elementary and obvious a point hardly needs to be made; but it does need to be made, and stressed, because it is constantly ignored or slurred over not only in popular but even in philosophical treatments of the problem of evil. Much more interesting than this is the suggestion that things that are evil in themselves may contribute to the goodness of an 'organic whole' in which they are found, so that the world as a whole is better as it is, with some evils in it, than it could be if there were no evil. This suggestion may be developed in several ways. It may be supported by an aesthetic analogy, by the fact that contrasts heighten beauty, and that in a musical work, for example, there may occur discords which somehow add to the beauty of the work as a whole. Alternatively, the notion of progress may be used: it may be argued that the best possible organization of the world will be not static but progressive, perhaps with what Kant called an endless progress towards perfection: the gradual overcoming of evil by good is really a finer thing than would be the eternal unchallenged sovereignty of good.

In either case, this solution usually starts from the assumption that the evil whose existence constitutes the problem of evil is primarily what is called physical evil, that is, pain, suffering, and disease. If this is taken as the difficulty, the theist can reply that these things make possible the existence of sympathy, kindness, heroism, and the gradually successful struggle of doctors, reformers, and so on to overcome these evils. Indeed, theists often seize the opportunity to accuse those who raise the problem of taking a low, materialist view of good and evil, equating these with pleasure and pain, and of ignoring the more spiritual goods which arise, and can only arise, in the struggle against evils.

To understand this solution, let us call pain, suffering, disease, and combine an instrumental explanation of evil with the more consistent view that 'sin plus redemption is of more value in the sight of God than an innocence that permits neither sin nor redemption'. For other hints of the latter view, see the quotations to which n. 10 to Chapter 14 below (p. 257) refers . the like 'first-order evil'; what contrasts with these, for example pleasure and happiness, will then count as 'first-order good'. Distinct from this will be 'second-order good' which somehow emerges in an organic whole, a complex situation in which some first-order evil is a necessary component: that is, the first-order evil is logically, not merely causally, necessary for the emergence of the second-order good. Exactly how this emerges will vary from case to case: it may be simply the heightening of happiness by the contrast with misery, or it may include sympathy with suffering, heroism in facing dangers, or the gradual decrease of first-order evil and the gradual increase of first-order good. Then to explain the first-order evils in a theistically satisfactory way it must be held that the second-order good is greater in magnitude or importance than the first-order evil which is logically necessary for it, that the good outweighs the evil it involves. This is a particularly subtle attempt to solve the problem. It defends God's goodness and omnipotence on the ground that (on a long enough view) this is the best of all possible worlds, because it includes the important second-order goods, and yet it admits that real evils, namely the first-order ones, occur. It reconciles these apparently incompatible theses by, in effect, modifying one of our additional premisses. It denies that a wholly good being would eliminate evil as far as he could, but explains this denial by pointing to a reason why a being who is wholly good, in a sense that is thoroughly intelligible to us and coherent with the ordinary concept of goodness, might not eliminate evils, even though it was logically possible to do so and though he was able to do whatever is logically possible, and was limited only by the logical impossibility of having the secondorder good without the first-order evil. Since this defence is formally possible, and its principle involves no real abandonment of our ordinary view of the opposition between good and evil, we can concede that the problem of evil does not, after all, show that the central doctrines of theism are logically inconsistent with one another. But whether this offers a real solution of the problem is another question. Let us call an evil which is explained and justified in the proposed way an absorbed evil. For example, some bit of suffering which is actually the object of kindness or sympathy whose goodness outweighs the badness of that suffering itself will be an absorbed evil, as will be miseries or injustices that are in fact progressively overcome by a struggle whose nobility is a higher good which outweighs the evils without which it could not have occurred. What this defence shows, then, is that the existence of completely absorbed evils is compatible with the existence of an omnipotent and wholly good god.

But then the vital question is this: can the theist maintain that the only evils that occur in the world are absorbed evils? When this question is squarely put, it is surely plain that he cannot. On the one hand there are surplus first-order evils, suffering and the like which are not actually used in any good organic whole, and on the other there are second-order evils; these will not be incorporated in second-order goods, but will contrast with them: malevolence, cruelty, callousness, cowardice, and states of affairs in which there is not progress but decline, where things get worse rather than better. The problem, therefore, now recurs as the problem of unabsorbed evils, and we have as yet no way of reconciling their existence with that of a god of the traditional sort.

This brings us to the best known move in theodicy, the free will defence: evils—that is, as we can now say, unabsorbed evils--are due entirely to bad free choices made by human beings and perhaps by other created beings that have free will. But how is this a defence? Why would a wholly good and omnipotent god give to human beings--and also, perhaps, to angels--the freedom which they have misused? The answer must be either that such freedom is itself a higher, thirdorder, good which outweighs the evils which are either constituted or brought about by its misuse--or, at the very least, which, when the freedom was conferred, outweighed whatever risk of these was even divinely foreseeable--or else that such freedom is logically necessary for some other third-order goods which do the outweighing. Since these (bad) choices are freely made by men or by fallen (or falling) angels, neither they nor their effects can be ascribed to God. All that can be or needs to be ascribed to him is the creation of beings with the freedom to make morally significant choices. But it must also be held that the existence and functioning of such beings either are higher-order goods, or are a logically necessary presupposition of higher-order goods, which outweigh (the risk of) such bad choices and their consequences, so that a god might reasonably choose to create such beings and leave them free.

It is plain that this is the only solution of the problem of evil that has any chance of succeeding. This defence alone allows the theist to admit that there arc some real and unabsorbed evils, some items which the world would, from however broad and ultimate a perspective, be better without (so that this is not the best of all possible worlds), and yet at the same time to detach their occurrence from God, to show them as not having been chosen by God, who none the less seems to have been given a reason, compatible with his complete goodness and omnipotence, and perhaps with his omniscience too, for bringing about the state of affairs from which they arise and for allowing them to occur. We shall, therefore, have to examine this solution with some care. But first I want to glance at some other approaches.

(b) Attempts to Sidestep the Problem

One of these approaches may be summed up in the phrase 'God's goodness is not ours'. In other words, when the theist says that God is wholly good he does not mean that God has anything like the purposes and tendencies that would count as good in a human being. But then why call him good? Is not this description misleading? Or is 'good' here being used simply as an honorific term, without its usual descriptive meaning? Hume appropriately puts this suggestion into the mouth of his sceptic, Philo, who says that 'we have no more reason to infer, that the rectitude of the supreme Being resembles human rectitude than that his benevolence resembles the human'.

John Stuart Mill, in his Autobiography, points out that this approach was implicit in much of the religious teaching of his time. His father, he says, looked upon religion as the greatest enemy of morality, 'above all, by radically vitiating the standard of morals; making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful'. In effect God is being called good, while at the same time he is being described as bad, that is, as having purposes and acting upon motives which in all ordinary circumstances we would recognize as bad; he is depicted as behaving in some respects like a malevolent demon, in others like a petulant tyrant, and in others again like a mischievous and thoughtless child. Now certainly if such motives as these are ascribed to God, there will be no difficulty in reconciling his omnipotence with the occurrence of what would ordinarily be called evils. But to argue in this way is merely to defend a shadow, while abandoning the substance, of the traditional claim that God is wholly good. Another approach says that it is a mistake to try to minimize evil, or even to see it as a problem for religion. Theists, Rolf Gruner says, 'would be wiser still if they not only admitted evil but emphasized it as crucial. For it is no overstatement to say that their faith depends on it. All religious belief is connected with the manner in which men see themselves and the world, and where the "tragic sense" of life is lacking and the consciousness of indigence, deficiency and transitoriness absent, religion will be unknown. Perfect beings in a perfect universe have no need of it, nor apparently have those for whom evils are avoidable defects to be gradually eliminated by man's growing perfection . . . the strongest believers have usually been those who have had the firmest conviction of the reality of evil, and many or most of them have never made any attempt at theodicy.'

There is certainly some truth in this, and it is at least a plausible suggestion (which will receive some support in Chapter 10) that men would not have developed religion in a happier or less frustrating world. Of such a world Bishop Heber might have said All round, with lavish kindness God's gifts like manna fall; The heathen, in their blindness, Do not bow down at all.

But how does this remove or resolve the problem of evil? Gruner clearly thinks it is paradoxical that 'Christianity depends on the very fact which is said to disprove it'. There is indeed a paradox here, but it lies squarely within orthodox theism. Hume brings this out clearly. While giving the argument for design and the associated task of theodicy to Cleanthes, he puts Gruner's view into the mouth of Demea. What he thus conveys is that both of these represent real and influential, though opposite, trends within orthodox religion. 'It is my opinion', Demea says, 'that each man feels, in a manner, the truth of religion within his own breast; and from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery, rather than from any reasoning, is led to seek protection from that Being, on whom he and all nature is dependent.' And he goes on to stress the miseries of human life. When Cleanthes protests that his experience, at least, does not support this dismal view, Demea replies, 'If you feel not human misery yourself . . . I congratulate you on so happy a singularity'.

Demea's emphasis on the wretchedness of human life is then used by Philo for his presentation of the problem of evil. But Demea, like Gruner, is not disturbed by this problem: 'This world is but a point in comparison of the universe: This life but a moment in comparison of eternity. The present evil phenomena, therefore, are rectified in other regions, and in some future period of existence. And the eyes of men, being then opened to larger views of things, see the whole connection of

general laws, and trace, with adoration, the benevolence and rectitude of the Deity, through all the mazes and intricacies of his providence.'

But, as Cleanthes says, these are 'arbitrary suppositions'; we cannot rely on them when the issue whether there is a just, benevolent, and all-powerful deity is still in doubt. And, as Philo says, even if pain and misery in man were compatible, with infinite power and goodness in the Deity (on the supposition that it will all be put right somehow, somewhere, sometime), this is useless if we are still at the stage of trying to infer the existence and the attributes of a god from what we independently know. And even if there were a future life in comparison with which the evils of this one would seem negligible, that still would not explain, compatibly with theism, the occurrence of those evils themselves. The mere fact, then, that faith often rests upon a tragic sense of the evil in the world does not do away with the need for a theodicy. It means, no doubt, that some of the firmest believers feel no need for a theodicy; but one is still needed if their position, and that of theism generally, is to be made rationally defensible. (We shall return, in Chapters 11 and 12, to the question whether religion can simply do without a rational defence.) But can a theodicy be, not dispensed with, but rather supplied by this connection between evil and faith? Does God make this world a wretched place so that men will feel the need for religion? Are not only suffering but also sinfulness necessary for the higher goods of redemption and of man's realization of his utter dependence on God? Two suggestions need to be distinguished here. The notion that God uses evils as a means to such higher goods is, as we have seen, incompatible with the doctrine that he is omnipotent, and therefore does not need to use deplorable means to achieve his ends. It is, of course, understandable that an all too human deity might decide to make his creatures miserable so that they would be more abject in their devotion: 'I'll make it hot for them, and then they will come crawling back to me'.

But this account is inconsistent alike with God's goodness and with his power. It would be more coherent to argue that sin, for example, is logically necessary for repentance and redemption, and that 'joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance'. Sin followed by repentance and redemption would then be an absorbed evil. But, however good the authority for it, this is a very strange view. What the parables plausibly say is that a father may rejoice more over the return of a prodigal son than over another's merely constant good behaviour, and that a frugal housewife may be more pleased about recovering a coin she had thought she had lost than about simply not losing several of equal value. But it does not follow that the father prefers on the whole to have a prodigal son who ultimately returns than to have a constantly well-behaved one, or that the housewife would be better pleased on the whole to have lost the coin and found it again than never to have lost it. Perhaps these, odd though they are, would be comprehensible human reactions; even so, it would be hard to transfer them to a supposedly omniscient god, or to endorse the sober evaluation that sin plus repentance is, as an organic whole, better than sinlessness. Gruner, in fact, does not argue in these ways. He thinks that 'the argument from evil . . . cannot be answered at all but only circumvented'. The circumvention consists in attacking as incoherent the demand, supposedly implicit in the sceptic's attack on theism, for a world free from all evil. But this is a misleading way of stating the issue. The sceptic is not asking for anything: he is merely asking whether an apparent inconsistency in the theist's position can be cured.

The demand for a world free from all evil is one that seems to be implicit in the set of doctrines that make up orthodox theism-though, as we have seen, such theism also stresses and trades upon the fact that the world is not free from evil. No doubt a created world--and particularly what Gruner calls 'a real, earthly, "thisworldly" world--as opposed to a realm of pure spirit'--could not be free from what might be seen as mere limitations and deficiencies: it could not, like God, be infinitely perfect; but nothing has been said to show that real, deplorable, unabsorbed evils, such as theists themselves constantly condemn, are logically necessary in an earthly world.

(c) The Paradox of Omnipotence

We shall have to come back, then, to the free will defence as the only hope for a reasoned theodicy. But there is a preliminary problem about the relation between omnipotence and free will. Are men supposed to be free in the sense merely that God does not control their choosing, or in the sense that he cannot do so? The second alternative poses the paradox of omnipotence: can an omnipotent being make things which he cannot control? When I originally raised this question, I thought that it was a genuine paradox, that the question could not be answered satisfactorily either in the affirmative or in the negative. I argued that we should distinguish between orders of omnipotence: first-order omnipotence would be unlimited power to act, second-order omnipotence unlimited power to determine what powers to act things should have. (And so on, if required.) But then if a god had second-order omnipotence he could use it so as to give certain things a power to act that was independent of his own power to act, so that he would not then have first-order omnipotence.

Omnipotences of different orders can thus come into conflict with one another, and I concluded that nothing could have omnipotences of all orders at once. However, this was a mistake. Clearly, a god might have both first- and second-order omnipotence, so long as he did not exercise his second-order power in such a way as to limit his first-order power. But, further, it has been argued that the phrase 'things which an omnipotent being cannot control' is self-contradictory, so that to make such things is logically impossible, and therefore that God cannot make such things, but that this is no defect in omnipotence of any order, since it has been agreed all along that omnipotence does not include the power to do what is logically impossible. Hence the negative answer to the paradox question is satisfactory after all. But is there not an equally plausible defence of the affirmative answer? If a being with second-order omnipotence confers on certain beings a power of making uncontrollable choices, then to control their choices would be to control things that are omnipotently made uncontrollable, and this is logically impossible. Hence, even a being with (first-order) omnipotence is unable to control such things, and failure to control them does not count against his omnipotence, since, as before, this is admittedly limited by logical impossibilities.

Thus an omnipotent being can make things such that he cannot control them. But if both the affirmative and the negative answers are thus defensible, the paradox is reinstated. We no longer have a contradiction within the notion of unrestricted omnipotence, omnipotence of all orders at once, but we have instead an undecidable question about it. This problem is related to another question: does omnipotence entail omnificence? If there were an omnipotent (and omniscient) being, would everything that happens be his doing? We might argue as follows: if God can make it to be that not-X, but it is that X, then he has knowingly allowed it to be that X; and is this not

equivalent to making it to be that X? Against this, it might be argued that there is a clear everyday distinction between positively bringing something about and merely letting it happen when one could have prevented it. Letting someone die when one could have saved him is not quite the same thing as killing him, though it is a point in dispute among moralists whether the one is as bad as the other. But we must also consider on what this everyday distinction rests. If we bring something about, we exert effort, but if we merely allow it to happen we do not; rather, we spare ourselves the effort it would have cost us to prevent it. There is a passage of force between agent and result when we do something, but not when we merely allow it to happen. Also, merely allowing something to happen, even though we know in some sense that it will, is commonly associated with some degree of inadvertence; bringing something about (intentionally) usually involves some conscious attention. But the more completely the matter is within our power, the less clear does the first ground of distinction become. If it is something that we can either bring about or prevent with negligible effort, allowing it to happen is less clearly differentiated from bringing it about. Similarly, the more completely the matter is within our knowledge and at the focus of our attention, the less clear does the second ground of distinction become. It seems, then, that as power and knowledge increase without limit, this everyday distinction fades out, and for a being with unlimited power and unlimited vision it would not hold at all.

In short, it seems that omnipotence and omniscience together entail omnificence: God does everything. Of course this need not mean that no one else does anything. A man does whatever we ordinarily take him as doing; but if there is a god whose omnipotence means that he is in full control of the man's choices, then he does it too. It would follow that if men sin, then God is also the author of that sin. 11 Consequently the free will defence cannot detach evil from God unless it assumes that the freedom conferred on men is such that God cannot (not merely does not) control their choosing. That is, it has to adopt exclusively the affirmative answer to the question in the original paradox of omnipotence, despite the fact that there is nothing in the concept of omnipotence that justifies a preference for this over the negative answer. Plainly, these are difficulties for theism. But let us suppose (simply in order to complete the discussion) that they can somehow be surmounted, and assume that the freedom invoked in the free will defence is a freedom of choice that even God cannot control.

(d) The Free Will Defence

It is customary to disguinguish natural evils, such as pain, from moral evils, the various forms of wickedness. Moral evils, it is suggested, consist in the misuse of freedom of choice; they are thus directly covered by the free will defence. Some natural evils are due partly to human wickedness--for example, cruelty--or to human mistakes; but only partly, for something else must have provided the opportunities for cruelty and the conditions in which mistakes can do harm. But the vast majority of natural evils cannot be ascribed to human choices at all, and it seems, therefore, that the free will defence cannot cover them even indirectly. But Alvin Plantinga argues that it can cover them, since they can be ascribed to the malevolent actions of fallen angels. Formally, no doubt, this is possible; but it is another of what Cleanthes called arbitrary suppositions. While we have a direct acquaintance with some wrong human choices--our own--and our everyday understanding extends to the recognition of the like choices of other human beings, we have no

such knowledge of the activities of angels, fallen or otherwise: these are at best part of the religious hypothesis which is still in dispute, and cannot be relied upon to give it any positive support. This is at most a Swinburne points out, in The Existence of God, p. 202 , this is an ad hoc hypothesis the addition of which tends to disconfirm the hypothesis that there is a god. possible explanation of natural evils: it could not be said actually to explain them, even if the free will defence as a whole were in good order.

This fact is all the more important, because the boundary between natural and moral evils is not simple or clear-cut. Even the worst human behaviour has a somewhat mixed character. 'Here we shall find', says Francis Hutcheson, 'that the basest actions are dressed in some tolerable mask. What others call avarice, appears to the agent a prudent care of a family, or friends; fraud, artful conduct; malice and revenge, a just sense of honour and a vindication of our right in possessions, of fame; fire and sword, and desolation among enemies, a just thorough defence of our country; persecution, a zeal for the truth, and for the eternal happiness of men, which heretics oppose. In all these instances, men generally act from a sense of virtue upon false opinions, and mistaken benevolence; upon wrong or partial views of public good, and the means to promote it; or upon very narrow systems formed by like foolish opinions. It is not a delight in the misery of others, or malice, which occasions the horrid crimes which fill our histories; but generally an injudicious unreasonable enthusiasm for some kind of limited virtue.' This is surely right. Hutcheson was writing in 1725, but what he says here applies equally well to the horrors of the twentieth century. Wars, great or small; Stalin's tyrannies and persecutions; the Nazi holocaust; the unleashing of firestorms on German cities; Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Vietnam; Cambodia; terrorism of all varieties; Islamic fanaticism; in all of these some kind of idealism has played a significant part, providing some justification or excuse, however misguided, that falls under one or more of Hutcheson's headings. Where several parties start with what seems a reasonable pursuit of their legitimate aspirations, they can be and often are trapped in states of conflict where to do terrible things to one another--and, incidentally, to innocent bystanders-appears justifiable or even obligatory. We cannot put this down simply to human failings: a large part of the fault lies in the way these conflict traps arise from human interactions, indeed, but not as the fulfilment of any human intentions. There are circumstances of injustice: situations in which people are led to the extremes of inhumanity by steps each of which seems reasonable or even unavoidable. These circumstances of injustice are, therefore, an important variety of naturalevils which are constantly intertwined with moral ones. There is more than Plantinga may have noticed for which his fallen angels would have to be given the discredit.

If the free will defence is to be of any use to theism, then, it must be extended to cover natural evils, presumably in Plantinga's way, arbitrary though that is. However, I shall leave this extension aside, and examine the argument simply with reference to human free will. Here we must take account of the omniscience that traditional theism ascribes to God. Is he supposed to know in advance, when he creates men with free will, all the uses they will actually make of it? Let us assume, first, that he does know this; we shall come back later to the alternative assumption that he does not. Given that God does know this, anyone who uses this defence must say that it is better on the whole that men should act freely, and sometimes--indeed, quite often--err, as they do, than that they should be innocent automata, acting rightly in a wholly determined way. But he must

also say that only these alternatives were open to God, that foreseeable human wrongdoing was an unavoidable accompaniment of freedom of choice--unavoidable even for a being whose powers were limited only by logical impossibilities. But how can this be so? If God has made men such that in their free choices they sometimes prefer what is good and sometimes what is evil, why could he not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? Since there seems to be no reason why an omnipotent, omniscient, and wholly good god would not have preferred this alternative, the theist who maintains that there is such a god, and yet that he did not opt for this--since by his own account human beings make bad free choices--seems to be committed to an inconsistent set of assertions. For at least some theists this difficulty is made even more acute by some of their further beliefs: I mean those who envisage a happier or more perfect state of affairs than now exists, whether they look forward to the kingdom of God on earth, or confine their optimism to the expectation of heaven. In either case they are explicitly recognizing the possibility of a state of affairs in which created beings always freely choose the good. If such a state of affairs is coherent enough to be the object of a reasonable hope or faith, it is hard to explain why it does not obtain already.

Nevertheless, it is often thought that this suggestion, that God could have made men such that they would always freely choose the good, is not coherent. Sometimes this objection rests merely on a confusion. It would, no doubt, be incoherent to say that God makes men freely choose the good: if God had made men choose, that is, forced them to choose one way rather than the other, they would not have been choosing freely. But that is not what was suggested, which was rather that God might have made--that is, created--beings, human or not, such that they would always freely choose the good; and there is at least no immediate incoherence or self-contradiction in that.

Again, it may be objected that the notion of beings such that they would always freely choose the good assumes that these beings would be free from temptations, that they would have only innocent inclinations, and so could not exemplify the moral value of resisting and overcoming temptations to do wrong. But it is not for me to make assumptions about this either way. Since I am charging the theist with holding incompatible beliefs, it is his conceptions of good, evil, and so on that are in play here. He can take his pick about which he considers to be the better state of affairs, either there being agents with free will but only innocent inclinations--that is, with what Kant calls a holy will--or there being free agents who have a mixture of good and bad inclinations but who always control their bad inclinations, resist temptations, and always act well after all for that reason--that is, who are governed by what Kant calls a sense of duty. The trouble is that, whichever of these he takes to be the ideal state of affairs, he also asserts or admits that it frequently fails to occur.

Having dismissed these two objections, we come to the serious question whether it might for some reason have been logically impossible that a god should create beings such that they would always freely choose the good. Let us consider this in a series of steps.

(i) Granted that it is logically possible that one man should on one occasion freely choose the good--which the theist undoubtedly concedes--might it be logically impossible that all men should always do so? Some objectors have thought this, suggesting that whatever is done freely must be sometimes not done. But there is no reason why this should be so, unless 'freedom' is actually defined so as to include or entail variation. And then we have a problem. Freedom, we remember,

is supposed to be a higher good which outweighs the badness of the bad actions, and of their results, which it is alleged to bring with it. But in so far as freedom definitionally involves variation, it is quite implausible to regard it as such a higher good. What special value could there conceivably be in the variation between good and bad choices as such? This variation aspect of freedom cannot be what makes it so very well worth while. And surely whatever the valuable, other, aspects or consequences of freedom may be, it is at least logically possible that they should exist without such variation, that is, without bad choices actually being made. So in any sense of 'freely' that is of use for the free will defence, it must be logically possible that all men should always freely choose the good; and, as we know, it is only logical possibility that matters here.

(ii) Granted this, might it be logically impossible that men should be such that they always freely choose the good? If determinism and freedom are compatible, there can be no difficulty about this step. On a determinist view, what agents choose to do results causally from what they antecedently are, and the ascription of freedom denies external constraints which would make their actions depend on something other than their natures; it may also deny certain internal, mental, conditions which would prevent their choices from being proper expressions of their natures. So what a determinist calls free choices flow determinedly from the nature of the agent, and it follows that if it is possible that men should always freely choose the good, it must be equally possible that they should be such that they do so. But if compatibilism is rejected, this step becomes controversial. And many thinkers have asserted incompatibilism. Some, accepting determinism, have therefore adopted 'hard determinism', explicitly rejecting what they take to be our ordinary notions of freedom, choice, responsibility, and desert, while others have denied determinism, partly in order to be able to maintain the applicability of these other notions. We must therefore digress to consider this issue.

(e) Digression: the Nature of Free Will

For our purposes, it is the second, libertarian, kind of incompatibilist that matters, the thinker who claims that we do indeed have contracausal free will. There are two great difficulties for this position, that of giving any evidence for it, and that of even saying just what contra-causal free will would be. The libertarian may try to meet both difficulties at once by appealing to our ordinary belief, or knowledge, that an agent frequently could have done otherwise than he did. Now if we can say truly, at time t2, that although A did X he could have done Y, the following statement must have been true at some earlier time t1: 'A can do X and he can do Y'. So let us concentrate on this supposed present situation at t1, that the agent can do either of these two things. Unfortunately, the word 'can' is indeterminate in meaning. Typically, it denies the presence of obstacles, constraints, or restrictions; but in different contexts it refers to obstacles, etc., of different kinds. In this case, it may mean that there are no external barriers to A's doing X or to A's doing Y, and hence that what he does is up to him. It may also mean that there is no abnormal psychological condition from which A is suffering (such as agoraphobia, or having been hypnotized) which would, say, prevent his doing Y or ensure his doing X. Or, again, it may mean that there is nothing at all that excludes either possibility, in particular, no set of antecedent sufficient causes for his doing X rather than Y, or vice versa. The causal determinist will in most ordinary cases agree that A can do X and can do Y in the first two senses, but deny this in the third; the libertarian will assert

it in the third sense, and therefore also in the other two. But since 'can', and hence also 'could have done otherwise', are systematically indeterminate in meaning between what the determinist accepts and what he rejects but the libertarian asserts, the everyday belief that agents often could have done otherwise does not even begin to settle the issue between them. Even if the libertarian could show that the ordinary use commonly expresses a belief that an agent could have done otherwise in the most comprehensive sense, that there was, antecedently, nothing at all that excluded the doing of Y, it would still be easy for the determinist to argue that this belief may itself rest on a confused transition from the one sense of 'can' and 'could have' to the other. Perhaps the libertarian will appeal to a 'sense of freedom', to some direct awareness that an agent has that he is choosing between (say) two courses of action that are both open to him in the most comprehensive sense: he knows that he can (without qualification) do X, and equally that he can do Y, that he is not even causally bound to go one way rather than the other. But how could he be aware of this? One can have a pretty direct awareness of external obstacles: one commonly knows, or can easily find out, if one is tied up, locked in, being swept away by a torrent, or indeed if someone is holding a pistol to one's head. Rather less reliably, one may be able to find out if one has been hypnotized or is suffering from some phobia or obsession. By contrast, one can therefore be fairly directly aware that there are, at the moment, no such constraints on one's choice or action. But in normal cases, where there are no such constraints as these, one would not be directly aware of any antecedent causes of one's choosing, and equally, therefore, one could not be directly aware of the absence of antecedent causes. Contracausal freedom, or the lack of it, simply is not the sort of thing of which we could have any 'sense', any immediate introspective evidence. And in fact some of the thinkers who have argued most energetically in favour of contra-causal freedom, such as C. A. Campbell, restrict it to cases where there is a struggle between the (moral) self and its so far formed character, and do not claim that it occurs in the most obvious everyday situations where people feel free to do one thing or another, for example, in deciding whether to have boiled potatoes or chips. Campbell argues that the self is conscious, in cases of struggle, of 'combating his formed character', and therefore 'knows very well indeed--from the inner standpoint--what is meant by an act which is the self's act and which nevertheless does not follow from the self's character'. Admittedly one can be aware of struggling against what one takes to be one's character as so far formed; but one cannot be immediately aware that what thus struggles lacks a causal history. On the other hand, it is true that there is no conclusive evidence or argument for causal determinism about human actions. The most weighty argument on this side relies on the assumption that all mental occurrences are either identical with neurophysiological ones or so closely correlated with their neurophysiological bases that determinism would carry over from the latter to the former, and hence to choices and actions. But this argument is somewhat weakened by the indeterminism that is currently accepted in quantum physics, together with the fact that triggering relations would allow an indeterminacy that belongs primarily to micro-phenomena to carry over into ordinary large-scale affairs. And in any case there would be an ignoratio elenchi involved in relying on a physicalist argument for a fundamental criticism of theism, since a theist would deny the physicalism, being committed to the view that spirit or consciousness is somehow prior to material things. Let us not, therefore, assert that causal determinism holds, but rather leave the possibility of indeterminism open, and see whether the libertarian can make any use of it.

Let us grant, then, that human choices and actions may not have antecedent sufficient causes; in what other ways might they come about? They might be purely random, subject to no cause and no explanation. Or there might be some element of randomness within limits set by prior causes. Or they might be brought about by events which are themselves subject only to statistical laws, such as those of quantum physics are supposed to be. But none of these possibilities is of the least use to a libertarian who is hoping to use the free will defence. For that defence requires that human free will should either be, or be necessary for, something of such great value that it outweighs the badness of such wrong choices as are made, and we can discern no such value in any of these kinds of complete or partial randomness. We can indeed discern value in freedoms of other sorts, for example in doing something because one so wishes, rather than through constraint or duress, or in choosing a pursuit because one values it, or in rationally weighing the merits and demerits of alternative courses of action that are, as far as external constraints are concerned, open to one, and choosing accordingly, or in not being subject to a neurotic compulsion, and so on. But freedoms of all these, and all similar, sorts are entirely compatible with causal determinism, and a fortiori, what matters for our present purpose, with an agent's being antecedently such that he will do one thing rather than another. We can, therefore, shelve the question of what evidence there is for the libertarian's view; it is an even greater problem for him to say clearly what sort of freedom he wants and believes that we have. What could count as a freedom that both is of supreme value (either in itself or in what it makes possible) and is incompatible with an agent's being such that he chooses freely in one way rather than another? There may be a hint in the account given by John Lucas of why we are reluctant to accept determinism. 'If my decision is predictable in this way'--that is, specifically, infallibly, and from temporally antecedent causes--'it is no longer . . . the starting point of action. The action no longer can be said to stem from my will, even though it be mediated through it. And therefore it seems it is not really mine.' But at most this could explain why each agent values his own cause-free status, rather self-centredly, not how contra-causal freedom might be of value from a divine point of view. In any ease, the thought that Lucas correctly reports here is confused. The action does stem from my will: why would it be more mine if I and my will had no causes that would make them predictable (in principle)? In such a line of thought there is often a hint that there is a real me, distinct from the one that is believed to have a causal history, and that if determinism held this real me would be helpless, an idle spectator of the course of events. But there is no reason for supposing that there is such an extra-causal self, and no account has been offered of how its operation would differ from that of a causal self. We have here a confused reason for disliking determinism, but no positive account of what non-causal action would be like, or how it would be of value. The mere deleting of causes and predictability, without some other change in the choosing itself, could not confer a new value upon it. Does Kant help us here? 'Will', he says, 'is a kind of causality belonging to living beings so far as they are rational. Freedom would then be the property this causality has of being able to work independently of determination by alien causes; just as natural necessity is a property characterizing the causality of all non-rational beings-the property of being determined to activity by the influence of alien causes." Kant thinks that a will is subject to alien causes if and only if it chooses or acts as it does because of inducements of some kind-desired ends, temptations, threats, rewards, and so on--whereas it is not subject to alien causes if it chooses simply in accordance with its own rational ideal of universal law or of humanity (or rational nature generally) as an end in itself. But though

Kant himself thought he was asserting the contra-causal freedom of some human actions, what he says fails to give any substance to this view. The real distinction he draws is between alien causes and the autonomous operation of the rational will. But this is entirely compatible with the two suppositions, that there are antecedent sufficient causes of a certain agent's having a rational will with a certain strength, and that what such a rational will does on any occasion, how it responds to its circumstances and struggles against contrary inclinations, depends causally on its character and its strength. Autonomy as contrasted with heteronomy is completely distinct from contra-causal freedom as contrasted with having had a causal history. Though Kant meant to assert both, he succeeded in describing only the former. These comments apply to the Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals. In a later work, the Metaphysic of Morals, he recognized this distinction. He there contrasted Wille, the good, autonomous, will, with Willkür, the will in the ordinary sense, the faculty of making choices, some right, some wrong, and ascribed contra-causal freedom only to the latter. But this emphasizes rather than resolves our present difficulty.

The value of freedom has been located in the autonomy, the self-legislative character, of the Wille; Kant adds nothing to our vague ordinary views about the value of the Wilikür's being uncaused, of the absence of a causal history behind our choices. In the Groundwork, however, he adds a second argument. In the sphere of speculative or theoretical reason 'we cannot possibly conceive of a reason as being consciously directed from outside in regard to its judgements; for in that case the subject would attribute the determination of the power of judgement, not to his reason, but to an impulsion. Reason must look upon itself as the author of its own principles independently of alien influences.' Analogously, 'as practical reason, or as the will of a rational being, it must be regarded by itself as free; that is, the will of a rational being can be a will of his own only under the Idea of freedom . . .' This argument has been echoed by many later writers; but it is unsound. The truth is that in the speculative area one cannot make a serious rational judgement, or express a genuine belief, and at the same time see oneself as being induced to hold that belief. No one can coherently say 'I believe X because I was bribed to do so' or 'I believe the quantum theory because otherwise I won't get a degree in physics' or--and this will come up again in Chapter 11, in connection with Pascal's wager--'I believe in God because I might go to hell if I didn't'. Equally one cannot have a serious rational belief and at the same time see it as having been caused wholly by irrational causes: for example, no one can coherently combine a serious religious belief with the admission that his own belief is caused wholly by indoctrination in childhood. But what this amounts to is that a rational theoretical judgement cannot be seen by the person who makes it as having been caused in any of the wrong sorts of way, that is, in ways irrelevant to the truth or justification of the belief. But there is no difficulty in holding a serious rational belief and at the same time seeing it as having been caused in a proper way. The simplest cases are where the state of affairs which is believed to obtain has caused the belief by affecting the believer's sense-organs and interacting with his innate or developed perceptual capacities. It is the presence of a table that has caused my belief that there is a table in front of me. But the same holds for more complicated reasons for belief. Lucas mistakenly assumes that someone who 'is open-minded towards the truth, and can be moved by new arguments that occur to him' cannot also see himself as 'determined by antecedent physical factors'; but there is no conflict between these, provided that those physical factors are (or will be) the bases or neural counterparts of good arguments. Analogously, a serious rational practical judgement does not need either to be or to see itself as uncaused; it needs merely

to see itself as not being improperly caused. Exactly what this means will depend upon the rest of the moral theory: for Kant, anything other than pure reason's itself being practical would be improper. But, whatever the proper operation is taken to be, no reason has been given why this should not itself have a causal history.

In short, Kant completely fails to supply any description of contra-causally free choosing that might be held to be of high value, nor have his followers been any more successful. A fortiori, we have not been shown any valuable kind of freedom that is incompatible with an agent's being such that he chooses freely in one way rather than another.

(f) The Free Will Defence -- continued

We can, then, return from this digression to our main argument, confident that it is not logically impossible that men should be such that they always freely choose the good.

(iii) Granted that this is possible, might it not be logically possible that God should create them so? Since the god in question is, by hypothesis, both omnipotent and omniscient, the creation of any contingent natures whatever should be within his power, and he must know exactly what natures he is creating. Might it be objected that to have been created by God with a certain nature would itself destroy an agent's freedom? No doubt 'freedom' might simply be defined as requiring the sheer springing up from nowhere of an agent's nature, and therefore as excluding that nature's having been created, with knowledge of it, by another agent: then for God to create free agents would be for him to create beings without any specific natures, leaving those natures to spring up from nowhere. But once again it is quite obscure what value there could be in freedom thus defined. There is, then, no incoherence in the proposed alternative, that God should have made men (and perhaps other free agents) such that they would always act well rather than badly; and, if so, the alleged overriding value of freedom provides no explanation of the occurrence of evils in a universe with a supposedly perfect creator.

But would it not be a rather dull world where everyone always acted rightly? Would not I myself find it boring if there were no confused theodicies to refute? Perhaps. But, as I have said before, it is for the theist, not for me, to say what he counts as good. If he says that a fair amount not only of mistake and folly but also of dishonesty, deceit, injustice, cruelty, hatred, malice, treachery, murder, genocide, and so on is all right, that these are appropriate components in what, taken as a whole, is an optimum state of affairs--that is, are wholly absorbed evils--then that is, indeed, for him a solution of the problem. If there are no unabsorbed evils, then theism is in the clear. But the free will defence was an attempt to reconcile theism with the admitted existence of unabsorbed evils, and it fails to do this. However, Alvin Plantinga has restated this defence with the help of his technical apparatus of possible worlds and individual essences. His argument has at its core a criticism of what he calls ' Leibniz's lapse'. Leibniz thought that if God is omnipotent he could have created any possible world he pleased, provided that it was a world that contained God himself. From the assumption that God is omnipotent in this sense, together with his omniscience and complete goodness, Leibniz inferred that the actual world must be the best of all possible worlds. (Strictly speaking, it would follow only that no possible world is better than this one: there might be others equally good.) This, of course, laid him open to Voltaire's satire in Candide. But

Plantinga argues that Leibniz need not have got into this trouble: there are possible worlds which even an omnipotent god is not able to create.

He illustrates this thesis with a story about one Curley Smith, a fictional mayor of Boston. Suppose that there is a certain concrete situation in which Curley may be offered a bribe, and he will be free either to take it or to reject it. Perhaps the truth is that if Curley is offered the bribe he will reject it. Then God was not able to create a possible world in which in this situation Curley is offered the bribe and takes it. Less happily, suppose that the truth is that if Curley is offered the bribe he will take it. Then God was not able to create a possible world in which in this situation Curley is offered the bribe and rejects it. Either way, there is at least one possible world which God cannot create, and consideration of other free choices shows that there must be many more. So far so good, and this disposes of Leibniz's lapse. But the crucial step comes next. Plantinga assumes that Curley is so corrupt that 'Every world God could have actualized is such that if Curley is significantly free in it, he takes at least one wrong action'. Curley Smith suffers from what Plantinga calls 'transworld depravity': in whatever world he exists, if he is significantly free he commits some wrong actions: this Plantinga takes to be a fact about Curley's individual essence. Now God, being omniscient, knows all about Curley's essence. There then seems to be a simple answer: whatever persons God creates, he had better not create Curley Smith. But what, asks Plantinga, if it is not only Curley who suffers from transworld depravity, but every other possible created person too? 'Now the interesting fact here is this: it is possible that every creaturely essence (i.e., every essence entailing is created by God) suffers from transworld depravity', and therefore 'it is possible that God could not have created a world containing moral good but no moral evil'. But how is it possible that every creaturely essence suffers from Transworld depravity? This possibility would be realized only if God were faced with a limited range of creaturely essences, a limited number of possible people from which he had to make a selection, if he was to create free agents at all. What can be supposed to have presented him with that limited range? As I have argued, it is not logically impossible that even a created person should always act rightly; the supposed limitation of the range of possible persons is therefore logically contingent. But how could there be logically contingent states of affairs, prior to the creation and existence of any created beings with free will, which an omnipotent god would have to accept and put up with? This suggestion is simply incoherent. Indeed, by bringing in the notion of individual essences which determinepresumably non-causally -- how Curley Smith, Satan, and the rest of us would choose freely or would act in each hypothetical situation, Plantinga has not rescued the free will defence but made its weakness all too clear. The concept of individual essences concedes that even if free actions are not causally determined, even if freedom in the important sense is not compatible with causal determination, a person can still be such that he will freely choose this way or that in each specific situation. Given this, and given the unrestricted range of all logically possible creaturely essences from which an omnipotent and omniscient god would be free to select whom to create, it is obvious that my original criticism of the free will defence holds good: had there been such a god, it would have been open to him to create beings such that they would always freely choose the good.

Yet one more attempt may be made to patch up the free will defence. In spite of all that has been said above, let us suppose that there is a concept of a kind of freedom which is of great value and which entails that an agent who is free in this sense chooses one way rather than another, and yet

is not antecedently such that he chooses this way rather than that. Let us suppose that, contrary to Plantinga's theory, there are no truths about Curley which entail that if he is offered a bribe in such and such circumstances he will take it, nor any which entail that he will not. Even an omniscient god does not know in advance what Curley would do if the bribe were offered, nor does he know, even when the bribe has been offered, what he will do until he does it. To suppose this is to take sides in the great debate about 'future contingents': God does not know these things, although he knows everything that there is to be known, because until Curley, for example, has made his decision, there is no truth about what he will decide to do. When God created free agents -- free in this sense -he had to do so without knowing how they would use their freedom.

This development of the defence succeeds better than any other in detaching moral evils, the wrong choices of free agents, from God. But it does so at the price of a very serious invasion of what has commonly been meant by the omniscience ascribed to God. If he does not know future contingents, and, in particular, does not know what free choices human agents will make, it follows that in 1935, for example, he knew little more than we did about the catastrophic events of the twenty years to 1955, and equally that he knows little more than we do now about the next twenty years. And such a limitation of his knowledge carries with it a serious effective limitation of his power. Also, this account forces the theologian to put God very firmly inside time. It could only be before God created Adam and Eve that he could not know what they would do if he created them, and the theologian cannot, without contradiction, give God also an extra-temporal existence and extra-temporal knowledge. This may, indeed, have some advantages: it would make things more interesting for God, and eliminate the sheer mystery of extratemporal existence and action. But it abandons important parts of the ordinary religious view.

But even this is not the end of the matter. Although, on this to earlier, especially medieval, discussions of the issue, but does not use it for a free will defence, in "'Formalities of Omniscience'", originally published in Philosophy 37 (1962), reprinted in his Papers on Time and Tense (Oxford University Press, 1968). account, God could not have known what Adam and Eve, or Satan, would do if he created them, he could surely know what they might do: that is compatible even with this extreme libertarianism. If so, he was taking, literally, a hell of a risk when he created Adam and Eve, no less than when he created Satan. Was the freedom to make unforeseeable choices so great a good that it outweighed this risk? This question must be answered not only with reference to the degree of human wickedness that has actually occurred: men might (strange as it may seem) have been much worse than they are, and God (on this account) was accepting that risk too. He would not then be the author of sin in the sense of having knowingly produced it; he could not be accused of malice aforethought; but he would be open to a charge of gross negligence or recklessness. But in any case we must withdraw the concession that we made provisionally in introducing this final version of the defence. No concept of freedom has yet been proposed that both requires that free choices should be isolated from the antecedent nature (or essence) of the agent and from the possibility of divine foreknowledge, and at the same time shows this freedom to be, or to be logically necessary for, a good so great that it outweighs the certainty of all the unabsorbed evils that occur, or the risk of all those that might occur. Nor, as we saw at the end of section (c), is there any ground for the required assumption that God could confer on men a freedom that put them beyond even his control.

In short, all forms of the free will defence fail, and since this defence alone had any chance of success there is no plausible theodicy on offer. We cannot, indeed, take the problem of evil as a conclusive disproof of traditional theism, because, as we have seen, there is some flexibility in its doctrines, and in particular in the additional premisses needed to make the problem explicit. There may be some way of adjusting these which avoids an internal contradiction without giving up anything essential to theism. But none has yet been clearly presented, and there is a strong presumption that theism cannot be made coherent without a serious change in at least one of its central doctrines. This conclusion may seem to be a very modest reward for our labours. It leaves open several possibilities for revised religious views. But it may be of some practical use, not only for its exposure of some typical attempts to escape the problem, but also because each of the changes that would make theism more coherent would also do away with some of its attraction.

Nominalism by Hartry Field, 2016 (Science Without Numbers)

Objects

I now think that the indispensability argument for the existence of mathematical objects is somewhat overblown. There's a great deal of recent literature in this direction. There is also some interesting work in partial defense of the indispensability argument; and one obvious challenge to those who would deny the relevance of the argument is that doing so seems to remove the means of deciding ontological questions. I don't have a worked out opinion on all of the issues involved in this literature, but I will make some tentative remarks on some of these issues and on some related ones. First, on my understanding of the indispensability argument: discussion of this argument (especially by those who emphasize its roots in Quine as opposed to Putnam) is very often tied to some doctrine of "confirmational holism", whose content tends to be left unclear. (It is sometimes formulated as the claim that all parts of our best theories areequally confirmed; that formulation has the advantage of being fairly clear, but the disadvantage of being totally preposterous.) In stating the in dispensability argumentit's better to avoid any explicit talk of confirmation, and talk instead of what to believe. As a crude first try, we mightsay: We should believe (e.g.) quantum electrodynamics, since it explains so many things and there's no decent competitor that does so. Quantum electrodynamics entails that there are mathematical entities. So we should believe that there are. (A somewhat more nuanced version would take into account that there are bound to be competing theories we don't know about, and involve as apremise that the competitors are likely to also entail that there are mathematical entities.) Idon't see that any thing worth calling "confirmational holism" is implicit in this. Quine advocated the indispensability argument in the context of the view that mathematics is fairly straightforwardly empirical—empirical in just the way that entrenched physical principles like the conservation of energy-momentum are. (Some sort of "confirmational holism" may be relevant to this.) I was inclined to resist that view: indeed I took the conservativeness of mathematics, according to which good mathematics is compatible with any internally consistent theory of the physical world, to tell against the idea that mathematics has any empirical contentinany or dinarysense. Quine's view seems to have been that I facer tain mathematical theory S proves in dispensable to (e.g.) a basic physical theory T, then the empirical evidence for T would be evidence for S, and so S would in a straightforward sense be empirically confirmed. But as Sober has emphasized, the assumption that

evidence for T is evidence for S appears to rely on a discredited view of evidence and confirmation (the "consequence condition"). Indeed, my focus on conservativeness was supposed to indicate that S was already completely acceptable as mathematics, so no evidence could raise its status. But there is another way of thinking about the bearing of indispensability arguments on empiricality, that doesn't rely on the consequence condition. For if we assume that there are possible physical theories in which mathematical entities are indispensable as well as possible ones where they aren't, the indispensability argument seems to require us to think that empirical evidence that favors theories of the first sort over theories of the second should enhance the extent to which we have literal belief in mathematical entities (as opposed to merely accepting them on conservativeness grounds). So if, for instance, classical physics were completely nominalizable while quantum physics isn't, then the early 20th century would have provided massive empirical evidence for the existence of mathematical objects (even though our mathematical theories would have already been fully acceptable for use in many contexts on conservativeness grounds). I don't think I really faced up to this unappealing consequence of taking indispensability arguments as decisive for mathematical ontology. My hope was that mathematical entities would prove indispensable to any reasonable fundamental physical theory, whether correct or not, so that insofar as evidence is limited to the selection of one "reasonable" fundamental theory over another it would prove irrelevant to the belief in mathematical entities. Of course this would make the task of establishing the requisite dispensability all the harder. Indeed, to some extent my hope wasn't limited to fundamental theories. Of course, non-fundamental theories (including those in physics, such as thermodynamics and continuum mechanics) are accepted only as approximations, so any nominalistic formulation of them would obviously have to make use off alse idealizing assumptions. That doesn't undermine the interest of trying to provide intrinsic nominalistic formulations of such theories based on such false assumptions. Butitisn't clear that area son able response to an indispensability argument would require this: see there marks on" intellectual double think" to come. In any case, a view with obvious appeal is that indispensability arguments in mathematics simply have no force: that mathematics is just the framework in which physical theories (and other theories, including e.g. theories in metalogic) are stated, and that there's no reason to literally believe the framework. Since the physical theory entails aspects of the framework, then if we don't believe the framework we can't literally believe the theory, but can still believe it relative to the framework. Despiteits obvious appeal, this view worried me, because I didn't know how to respond in any detail to someone who took the analogous view of subatomic particles: that talk of them is just the framework in which modern physical theories are presented, and that there's no reason to literally believe in them. Of course I was aware of a possible response: that we should regard as framework only those aspects of a theory that play no causal role. But that seems unhelpful: a claim about a function from configuration space to the complex numbers does enterinto explanations of how a physical system behaves, and if such a claim can't be expressed nominalistically then it's hard to deny that it plays a causal role(oratany rate, hard to see the content of such a denial). Why then shouldn't it be literally believed? Perhaps the claim would be that what are to be literally believed are only facts about causally relevant entities, and this excludes the complex numbers (and the configuration space, and the functions from the latter to the former). But even aside from general unclarity in the notion of causation, the notion of a causally relevantentityise specially unclear, and a platonist might well respond to the suggestion

(as I did on behalf of the Platonist) by saying that if mathematical entities are theoretically indispensable parts of causal explanations..., there seems to be an obvious sense in which they are causally involved in producing physical effects; the sense in which they are not causally involved would at least appear to need some explanation (preferably one that gives insight as to why it is reasonable to restrict [indispensability arguments] to entities that are "causally involved" in the posited sense). Lacking a good response to the apparent analogy between mathematical objects and subatomic particles, I took a hard line: that it is "intellectual doublethink" to fully advocate a physical theory that postulates mathematical entities while at the same time denying the existence of mathematical entities. ('Fully advocate' means something like 'advocate as literal truth, not as mere approximation'. So the "intellectual doublethink" charge has no direct application to non-fundamental theories, which inherently involve approximations.) Of course one might without doublethink accept the physical theory as a temporary expedient that one would have to make do with until a program for eliminating the mathematical entities was carried out; and even after the "nominalization" had been carried out, one might without doublethink accept the original "un-nominalized" theory as a convenient calculational or heuristic device whose legitimacy turns on the nominalistic theory that underpinsit. Many of the opponents of indispensability arguments mentioned early in this section have stressed that in theories like continuum mechanics—non-fundamental theories which presumably are accepted only a sap proximations—we make a lot of use of knowingly false assumptions about the physical world. They seem to take this as showing that it's perfectly OK to use mathematical assumptions that we believe false in physical theories that are as summed to precisely describe the physical world. It's hard to see their argument there, and indeed the argument could well seem to go the other way. For a great deal of effort in physicsis devoted to explaining, from fundamental theories assumed for the sake of argument to be precisely true, why the theory with false assumptions works as well as it does. So if we assume mathematics false, shouldn't the moral bet hat we must explain why theories that employ it work as well as they do, using a literally true theory in the explanation? That is the project of SWN, and it is still my view is that it is highly advantageous to do precisely that. But the in dispensability argument requires not only that it is better to explain the use of ideal or fictional objects in terms of things one literally believes in whenever one can, but that it is compulsory. This seems like dogma: why should we rule out that there might be circumstances where even in one's fundamental physics one has to employ some devices that one think so instrumentally? Yablo raised this challenge forcefully: once one has granted (as I did in my discussion of conservativeness and representation theorems) that it is legitimate and use fulto appeal to fictitious objects to facilitate the adjudication of inferences, why shouldn't one also grant that it can some times be legitimate and use ful to appeal to such objects directly in the representation of the physical world(including the representation of features that enter into explanations)? Yablo didn't stress to the extent I would have that it is better to look for theories and explanations that don't involve fictions, when the yare available, but still, his challenge seems to me correct. If so, the "intellectual doublethink" charge was wrong. This does make pressing the question of how to distinguish between the instrumental part and the non-instrumental. I don't pretend to have anything like a general answer. In the special case of mathematics, a natural idea (some what motivated by there mark son cardinality quantifiers above, and perhaps also by recent literature on deflationary theories of truth) is that without ontological commitment, mathematics can be used both to increase our power to describe the

physical world and to make generalizations about it. As Yablo puts it, “The nominalist rejects mathematical ontology, not mathemathical typology”. The restriction of mathematics to this expressive and generalizing role limits the way that mathematics can be used in explanations, but certainly doesn’t eliminate its use in explanations: for instance, mathematics might provide the most efficient way to state what is in common to all the stable states of a certain physical system, or what oscillating pendulums and electronic oscillator circuits have in common. By contrast, the role of subatomic particles in physics seems to have more than such a purely expressive/generalizing role.

Of course, these remarks are extraordinarily sketchy: we need a much more thorough investigation of the distinction between allowable and unallowable ways for a nominalist to use mathematics in explanation. (Section of Yablo gives some first steps.) And I’m not sure to what extent quantification over mathematical entities is really required in these cases: for instance, the harmonic oscillator equations in a given domain can certainly be presented nominalistically, and their common form in various domains should be evident without the mathematical entities. Still, I’m convinced that we should allow for the possibility of taking some features of even fundamental theories as instrumental (though we should also try to minimize the extent to which we rely on instrumental devices). A s a consequence, I’m still inclined to the anti-platonistic metaphysics of the book, despite skepticism that the project of nominalistically formulating every fundamental theory we care about can be carried out. But I don’t think that this skepticism completely undermines the relevance of SWN to the issue of nominalism, or anti-platonism more generally. For one thing, I think the book helped clarify the role that mathematical entities play in science, and how this role differs from the role that physical entities play. It was already clear that ther o les differ: as noted, it’s natural to say that mathematical entities aren’t causally involved in producing physical effects in the way that electrons and quarksare. But as also remarked, it is less than clear what this difference comes to, given that mathematical entities like physical entities are appealed to in typical (i.e. platonistic) explanations of those physical effects. I think it likely that the content of the difference in the “causal role of the entities” must be based on differences in the roles of these entities in explanations that can be expressed independently of causal talk. And I think that SWN went at least some way toward clarifying that difference in explanatory role. In part it did this by making plausible that much of the role of mathematical entities in science is to serve in representations that are not needed in the underlying(“intrinsic”) formulations of the physical theory and that have a systematic arbitrariness.(Of course there were antecedents to this, both in the literature on measurement theory and the literature on tensor formulations of physical theory; but SWN carried the ideas further.) SWN was almost certainly over-optimistic in suggesting that, at least in fundamental science, all use of mathematical entitiesin representing nonmathematical structure is eliminable. But even if there are theories that can’t be presented without the “fiction” of mathematical objects, I think that the methods of the book could be used to express a great deal of their contentin a nominalistic manner, farm ore than had hither to been believed. I think that in evaluating the claim that a certain representational device in a theory should be regarded as a fiction, it matters how much can be done without what is claimed to be a fiction. The exact role that these devices are playing in the theory also matters: an analysis of that role may lessen the extent to which an argument for the non-fictional status of these entities is convincing. For instance, if the role of sets in physical theory were simply to allow us to assert the

local compact ness of physical space, would this really provide a convincing case for platonism? I recognize of course that much of what I've said here (especially the last point) is vague and deserves more discussion; let me simply say that the proper context for the debate referred to, between Colyvan and Baker on the one side and Yablo, Sober, Melia, Maddy, Leng, and other son the other, is best carried out in the context of an appreciation that the essential role of mathematical entities in formulating scientific theories(especially fundamental scientific theories) is far less than it initially appears to be.

Objectivity

I've been speaking of the indispensability argument as an argument for the existence of mathematical objects. But as I've mentioned, platonic mis often understood as requiring in addition(or instead) akin dof objectivity of mathematics, exemplified by the view that questions such as the size of the continuum must have uniquely correct answers. It seems to me pretty clear that most indispensability arguments will not secure this sort of objectivity. For the most convincing indispensability arguments are arguments that we can't adequately characterize physical structures except by reference to mathematical structures: e.g. that we can't adequately characterize quantum systems without configuration spaces, or gauge fields without fibre bundles, or whatever. In these examples, the role of mathematical entities in theorizing that is not easily shown in dispensable is their role as exemplars of possibilities: mathematics provides rich structures that are not found in the physical world but that are nonetheless highly useful in describing the physical worlds ince we take the physical world to contain isomorphic images of substructures of them. But in its role as a source of rich structures, set theory with one choice of continuum size and set theory with another choice are equal: if mathematics with one choice for the size of the continuum were used in an application, one could use mathematics with another choice for the size as well (if need be, by constructing a model forthe second mathematics within the first). Even supposing that it is an objective matter whether physical lines contain points(which of course could well be doubted), it doesn't follow that the acceptability of a mathematics that says that the continuum has size$\aleph$ should turn on this: for on a platonist view, physical lines are one thing and the mathematical continuum (the set of real numbers as defined via Dedekind cuts) another. (That had better be the platonist view, since space-time is just one application of the real numbers, and there's no obvious reason to think that in other applications, e.g. to degrees of belief, the non-mathematical reality to which the reals are typically applied has the same structure as the lines of space-time.) Whatever one's view of the size of the Platonist continuum, physical lines can be accommodated, and so it isn't obvious how an indispensability argument could motivate the objectivity of mathematics.

In Defense of Scientific Realism by Stathis Psillos

Thus far, I have offered arguments against reductive empiricism, several versions of instrumentalism, either of the eliminative variety or of the Duhemian (noneliminative) variety. We have seen that the so-called 'Ramsey way' does not offer a stable and satisfactory compromise between realism and instrumentalism. So, the only alternative is to adopt a realist attitude towards the unobservable entities posited by our best theories. If semantic realism is adopted, then we have a straightforward answer to the question: what is the world like, according to a given scientific

theory? (Or, similarly, what is the world like, if a certain scientific theory is true?) The answer is none other than that the world is the way the scientific theory— literally understood—describes it to be. This answer seems to have certain implications for epistemological questions. Bluntly put, once semantic realism is adopted, the issue of warranted belief in the existence of unobservable entities seems to take care of itself: insofar as scientific theories are well confirmed, it is rational to believe in the existence of the entities they posit. For, what other than our best theories should we look to in order to decide what it is reasonable to believe about the world? If our best science is not our best guide to our ontological commitments, then nothing is. The realist turn in the philosophy of science since the early 1960s has aimed to remove the last scruples one might have against the confirmability and the actual confirmation of scientific theories. What realists have offered is a battery of arguments which aim to defend a scientific realist attitude towards our best scientific theories, while blocking their opponents' counterarguments purporting to show that scientific theories cannot be accepted as approximately true. So, the realist turn has aimed to secure the epistemic optimism associated with scientific realism—a view which was explained in the Introduction to this book. In this chapter, I try to show that this attitude of epistemic optimism is wellmotivated and warranted. A central argument in defence of scientific realism is the famous 'no miracle argument' (henceforth NMA) which aims to show that our best scientific theories can be reasonably believed to be approximately true. NMA has found its 'textbook' formulation in these words of Hilary Putnam:

The positive argument for realism is that it is the only philosophy that does not make the success of science a miracle. That terms in mature scientific theories typically refer (this formulation is due to Richard Boyd), that the theories accepted in a mature science are typically approximately true, that the same terms can refer to the same even when they occurs in different theories—these statements are viewed not as necessary truths but as part of the only scientific explanation of the success of science, and hence as part of any adequate description of science and its relations to its objects. (1975:73)

So, NMA aims to defend the realist claim that successful scientific theories should be accepted as true (or, better, near true) descriptions of the world, in both its observable and its unobservable aspects. In particular, the realist claim is that accepting that successful scientific theories describe truly (or, near truly) the unobservable world best explains why these theories are empirically successful. That is, it best explains why the observable phenomena are as they are predicted to be by those theories. As stated by Putnam, NMA is intended to be an instance of inference to the best explanation (henceforth IBE, or abduction). What needs to be explained, the explanandum, is the overall empirical success of science. NMA intends to conclude that the main theses associated with scientific realism, especially the thesis that successful theories are approximately true, offer the best explanation of the explanandum. Hence, they must be accepted precisely on this ground. This IBE-based reading of NMA underwrites the current defence of realism as developed by Richard Boyd and elaborated by me in the present chapter. Hence, I shall call this argument the Putnam-Boyd argument. It has, however, been repeatedly claimed that the Putnam—Boyd argument is viciously circular and begs the question against the critics of realism. For, it is noted, although the critics of realism deny (or simply doubt) that IBE is a reliable inferential method, NMA presupposes its reliability. As Fine (1991:82) has put it, an IBE-based defence of realism

lacks any argumentative force since it employs ‘the very type of argument whose cogency is the question under discussion’. Dispersing the charge of vicious circularity and question-beggingness should be a central task in my own defence of realism. But before that, some detailed discussion is required in respect of the structure of the main realist argument. In particular, in the subsequent sections I try to disentangle several versions of NMA. The next two sections motivate and articulate carefully what I take to be the most forceful version of NMA, showing that it can offer a good defence of realism, provided that it is seen as part-and-parcel of a thorough externalist and naturalistic realist epistemological package.

Cosmic coincidences and the success of science What appear to be variants of NMA had been put forward long before Putnam’s slogan appeared by J.J.C.Smart and Grover Maxwell. Smart argued against instrumentalists that they ‘must believe in cosmic coincidence’ (1963:39). To be sure, he referred to ‘phenomenalism about theoretical entities’, but took this to be eliminative instrumentalism, i.e. the view that ‘statements about electrons, etc., are only of instrumental value: they simply enable us to predict phenomena on the level of galvanometers and cloud chambers’ (ibid.). We have already seen (Chapter 2) that eliminative instrumentalism takes scientific theories to be merely syntactic/mathematical constructs for the organisation of experimental and empirical facts, and for grouping together empirical laws and observations which would otherwise be taken to be irrelevant to one another. On this view, theoretical claims are not even truthconditioned, i.e. capable of being true or false; nor do theories imply existential commitments to unobservables. The emergence of Craig’s theorem coincided with the culmination of this view. For, as we have seen (pp. 22–23), it offers the instrumentalist a systematic way to eliminate theoretical terms. On the eliminative instrumentalist account, a vast number of ontologically disconnected observable phenomena are ‘connected’ only by virtue of a purely instrumental theory: they just happen to be, and just happen to be related to one another in such a way that a Craig-style theory is true. If so, what other than a gigantic coincidence makes a Craigian theory true? Accepting the vast number of purely instrumental connections implied by the Craig-style theory exceeds the limits of tolerance, especially when there is a handy account that does away with all this happenstance. But look at scientific realism, says Smart. It leaves no space for coincidence on a cosmic scale: it is because theories are true and because the unobservable entities they posit exist that the phenomena are, and are related to one another, the way they are. Here is the contrast in Smart’s own words:

Is it not odd that the phenomena of the world should be such as to make a purely instrumental theory true? On the other hand, if we interpret a theory in the realist way, then we have no need for such a cosmic coincidence: it is not surprising that galvanometers and cloud chambers behave in the sort of way they do, for if there are really electrons, etc., this is just what we should expect. (1963:39)

One may take Smart’s argument to be a version of the ‘no miracle’ argument put forward by Putnam. At first glance, it seems that we are indeed dealing with one and the same argument. The only difference seems to be lexical: Smart bars cosmic coincidences. while Putnam bars miracles. Smart himself, after all, has also talked about a ‘cosmic miracle’ (1979:364). Both arguments, it seems, rely on what they take to be the best explanation of why the observable phenomena are as they are predicted by scientific theories. As a rough approximation, this might be alright. However,

if we look carefully at the details of the two arguments, it is pertinent to distinguish Smart's version from the Putnam-Boyd version of the NMA. Smart's argument is not meant to be an inference to the best explanation. It is more of a general philosophical argument, what is sometimes called a plausibility argument (cf. Smart 1963:8–12). For Smart, the argument for realism is largely a priori. He takes it that part, at least, of the distinctively philosophical method is to clarify conceptual disputes, i.e. disputes which are not amenable to empirical tests. On this view, the philosopher's job is to offer arguments in favour of each side of the dispute. Consistency is not at stake here, because every position can be made into a consistent one, given enough ingenuity. Rather, the philosopher should aim to examine the plausibility or arbitrariness of each position, especially in those grand disputes that 'affect our overall world view' (Smart 1963: 8). The realist—instrumentalist controversy is conceived by Smart to be such a grand conceptual dispute about the interpretation of scientific theories. Accordingly, Smart's 'no cosmic coincidence' argument relies on primarily intuitive judgements as to what is plausible and what requires explanation. It claims that it is intuitively more plausible to accept realism over instrumentalism because realism leaves less things unexplained and coincidental than does instrumentalism. Its argumentative force, if any, is that anyone with an open mind and good sense could and would find the conclusion of the argument intuitively plausible, persuasive and rational to accept—though not logically compelling: not because one would recognise the argument as an instance of a trusted inferential scheme, but because of intuitive considerations about what is more and what is less plausible. An analogous argument for realism was offered Maxwell (1962a). To the best of my knowledge, he was the first to appeal explicitly to the success of scientific theories in order to to defend realism. The overall empirical success of science, says Maxwell, is a fact that calls for an explanation. The instrumentalist claim that theories are 'black boxes', which when fed with true observational premisses yield true observational conclusions, would offer no explanation whatsoever of the fact that these 'black boxes' are so successful. In light of this, he claims: 'The only reasonable explanation for the success of theories of which I am aware is that well-confirmed theories are conjunctions of well-confirmed, genuine statements and that the entities to which they refer in all probability exist' (1962a: 18). As he has pointed out elsewhere, the difference between realist and instrumentalist accounts of science is that

> as our theoretical knowledge increases in scope and power, the competitors of realism become more and more convoluted and ad hoc and explain less than realism. For one thing, they do not explain why the theories which they maintain are mere cognitively meaningless instruments are so successful, how it is that they can make such powerful, successful predictions. Realism explains this very simply by pointing out that the predictions are consequences of the true (or close true) propositions that comprise the theories. (Maxwell 1970:12)

Maxwell's argument differs from Smart's in an interesting way. It includes an attempt to ground the plausibility judgements that are required for the defence of realism and to show that such judgements are not, after all, distinctively philosophical. In a certain sense, Maxwell's argument is the 'bridge' between Smart's a priori argument and the subsequent Putnam-Boyd naturalistic version. Maxwell suggests that considerations of simplicity, comprehensiveness and lack of ad hocness are virtues that make judgements displaying them more plausible than judgements lacking them. What is more, Maxwell (1970) gives a Bayesian twist to his argument for realism. He

emphasises that on standard probabilistic accounts of confirmation, if two or more mutually inconsistent hypotheses entail the same piece of evidence, the only way in which the evidence can be made to support one hypothesis more than the other(s) is via some kind of initial plausibility ranking of the competing hypotheses. This ranking is then reflected in the prior probabilities ascribed to the competing hypotheses. His argument for realism capitalises precisely on this well-worn fact. Suppose, he says, that both realism (R) and instrumentalism (I) entail that scientific theories are successful (S). Then, the likelihoods of realism and instrumentalism are both equal to unity; i.e.:

By Bayes' theorem, the posterior probability of realism is

and the posterior of instrumentalism is

where prob(R) is the prior probability of realism, prob(I) is the prior of instrumentalism and prob(S) is the probability of the 'evidence', i.e. of the success of science. Given that prob(S) is the same for both realism and instrumentalism, any difference in the degree of confirmation of R and I should reflect a difference in their respective priors. Based on the thought that the realist explanation of the success of science is simpler, more comprehensive and less ad hoc than any instrumentalist attempt at such an explanation, Maxwell (1970:17–18) argues that the prior probability of realism should be much greater than the prior of instrumentalism: i.e. prob(R)>>prob(I). Hence, the incremental confirmation of Realism is much greater than that of Instrumentalism. I think Maxwell's point is two-fold. On the one hand, relying on prior probabilities is a routine aspect of all human judgement. It is also evident in scientific practice itself: not all theoretical hypotheses which entail the same evidence are ranked as equally plausible by scientists. In fact, the very virtues of simplicity, comprehensiveness and lack of ad hocness are those used by scientists to rank competing scientific hypotheses. On the other hand, philosophical problems, such as the realist-instrumentalist dispute are not much more difficult than—nor qualitatively different from—ordinary scientific problems, where no evidence can distinguish between two competing hypotheses. So, they call for the same treatment as ordinary scientific problems. As Maxwell puts it: 'My reasons for accepting realism are of the same kind as those for accepting any scientific theory over others which also explain current evidence' (ibid.).1 All this is a bit quick, the reader might think. Prior probabilities might indeed be indispensable in ampliative reasoning. But on what basis, the reader may ask, do we say that realism's prior probability is greater than that of (eliminative) instrumentalism? Since the conclusion of the argument depends crucially on assigning different priors to realism and instrumentalism, this conclusion would have been otherwise had we adopted an initial ordering which favoured instrumentalism over realism. How, then, can this ordering be decided? In particular, is this ordering supposed to be objective or subjective? If the former, then we need some further argument as to why realism is objectively more probable than instrumentalism. If the latter, what do subjective degrees of belief, or subjective estimates of prior probability, have to do with the alleged superiority of realism? What it is correct to stress, I think, is that when it comes to the realism—instrumentalism debate an assignment of higher prior probability to realism can be rational—and hence objective—in these two senses. First, judgements of initial plausibility can be the subject and outcome of rational deliberation. One way, for instance, to argue for the greater initially

plausibility of realism is to point out that realism derives much of its plausibility from a judgement which all parties in the realism debate would find rational —the very judgement which underlies the positing of middle-sized material objects. Against eliminative instrumentalism, realists rightly stress a certain analogy—and continuity— between positing middle-sized material objects to account for the orderly and coherent streams of sensory experience and positing scientific unobservables to account for the observable phenomena. If common sense has been the only thing required for the former, then so much the better for the latter. In denying the existence of unobservable entities, eliminative instrumentalists have to adopt 'double existential standards'. But as we have seen (pp. 18–22), there are no good arguments to support such double standards. Second, judgements of initial plausibility can be rational and objective because they rely on sound expectations. Why is it initially more plausible to interpret scientific theories realistically? Because on an instrumentalist construal —such as mere 'black boxes', syntactic calculi and the like—there is no reason to expect that theories are capable of being empirically successful. To be sure, 'black boxes' and the like are constructed so that they systematise known observable regularities. But it does not follow from this that black boxes have the capacity to predict either hitherto unknown regularities or hitherto unforeseen connections between known regularities. Nor can such a thing be expected on any rational ground. However, if the theory is understood realistically, then novel predictions about the phenomena occasion no surprise. Realistically understood, theories entail too many novel claims, most of them about unobservables (e.g. that there are electrons, that light bends near massive bodies). It comes as no surprise that some of the novel theoretical facts a theory predicts may be such that they give rise to novel observable phenomena, or that they may reveal hitherto unforeseen connections between known phenomena. For instance, James Clerk Maxwell's theoretical identification of light with an electromagnetic wave predicted a hitherto unknown connection between the laws of light-propagation and the propagation of electric waves. At any rate, it would be very surprising if the causal powers of the entities posited by scientific theories were exhausted in the generation of the already-known empirical phenomena that led to the introduction of the theory. So, on a realist understanding of theories, novel predictions and genuine empirical success are to be expected (given, of course, that the world co-operates). The fact of the matter is that such judgements as those above have been strong enough to mitigate the force of standard instrumentalist accounts. As we saw in Chapter 2, similar plausibility judgements have been put forward by 'textbook instrumentalists' like Pierre Duhem and Henri Poincaré. Both have argued that novel predictive success—a feature that has not been stressed sufficiently well by Maxwell—is at odds with an eliminative instrumentalist construal of scientific theories as 'racks filled with tools' (Duhem 1906:334) or as 'simple practical recipes' (Poincaré 1902:174). This is not surprising: on an instrumentalist account, novel predictive success is, if anything, an accidental feature of theories. Maxwell's argument makes good on precisely this state of affairs. It suggests that scientific realism is the only alternative that overcomes the problem which makes instrumentalism implausible—how novel successful predictions are possible. What, I think, it adds to this suggestion is the following. Once theories are treated as semantic realism suggests, then their novel empirical success can accrue only to the theory's confirmation: the more unlikely the prediction, the greater the incremental confirmation of the theory which makes it available. There is no reason to doubt that Smart's and Maxwell's arguments undermine drastically the rationale of eliminative instrumentalism. But they are ineffective against sophisticated empiricist positions à

la van Fraassen (1980; 1989). For a long time eliminative instrumentalism was the dominant alternative to a realist understanding of scientific theories. Smart and Maxwell (and, for that matter, Feigl too) aimed to kill two birds with one stone. Their central point was that the success of scientific theories lent credence to the two theses:

• that scientific theories should be interpreted realistically; and

• that, so interpreted, these theories are well confirmed because they entail well-confirmed predictions.

So, their arguments operate on the assumption that an argument for the realist interpretation of scientific theories can be, ipso facto, an argument for believing in the existence of the entities they posit. Given what has been said in Chapters 1 and 2 about the fate of reductive empiricism and eliminative instrumentalism, this is a reasonable assumption. Once it is accepted that theories should be interpreted realistically, the only remaining issue is whether these theories are well confirmed. If one and the same argument can establish both, then so much the better for realism. However, the empiricist position advocated by van Fraassen accepts a realist interpretation of the semantics of scientific theories but challenges the rationality of belief in unobservable entities the existence of which these theories, if true, imply. Hence, in a certain sense, van Fraassen's position starts precisely where Smart's and Maxwell's arguments stop: that eliminative and reductive accounts of theoretical commitment in science are wrong-headed and discredited. As we shall see in detail in Chapter 9, one of van Fraassen's central points against scientific realism is that abductiveexplanatory reasoning, by means of which theoretical beliefs are formed, cannot be shown to be truth-conducive, and therefore that belief in the approximate truth of particular theories is not rationally compelling. In other words, he questions the reliability of the methods scientists employ to arrive at their theoretical beliefs. On van Fraassen's view, the collapse of eliminative instrumentalism does not make realism the only rational option. An agnostic variety of empiricism is not, ipso facto, ruled out: one can always remain agnostic as to the truth-value of the particular theoretical descriptions of the world offered by a theory. Boyd's important contribution to the debates over scientific realism, to which I now turn, is precisely that he has employed and strengthened the 'no miracle' argument in an attempt to defend the reliability and rationality of ampliative— abductive reasoning in science.

The explanationist defence of realism Boyd's 'explanationist defence of realism' (henceforth EDR) is a programme for the development and defence of a realist epistemology of science. Boyd suggests that this epistemology should be thoroughly naturalistic. On the one hand, it should rest on the claim that it is a radically contingent fact about the world that scientific theories can and do deliver theoretical truth. On the other hand, in its attempt to investigate the epistemic credentials of science, and in particular to answer the question why scientific methodology is instrumentally reliable, a realist epistemology of science should employ no methods other than those used by scientists themselves. Boyd's defence of realism is explanationist because it is based on the claim that the realist thesis that scientific theories are approximately true is the best explanation of their empirical success. Boyd's naturalism makes his use of the NMA distinctively different from Smart's and (to a lesser extent) from Maxwell's: there is no distinctive philosophical method which is either prior to scientific method or can be used to resolve first-order scientific disputes. In this

section I focus on the place of the ‘no miracle’ argument in EDR. Boyd2 has set out to show that the best explanation of the instrumental and predictive success of mature scientific theories is that these theories are approximately true, at least in those respects relevant to their instrumental success. I shall reconstruct the main argument as follows:

That the methods by which scientists derive and test theoretical predictions are theory-laden is undisputed. Scientists use accepted background theories in order to form their expectations, to choose the relevant methods for theory-testing, to devise experimental set-ups, to calibrate instruments, to assess the experimental evidence, to choose among competing theories, to assess newly suggested hypotheses, etc. All aspects of scientific methodology are deeply theory-informed and theoryladen. In essence, scientific methodology is almost linearly dependent on accepted background theories: it is these theories that make seientists adopt, advance or modify their methods of interaction with the world and the procedures they use in order to make measurements and test theories. These theory-laden methods lead to correct predictions and experimental success. How are we to explain this? The best explanation of the instrumental reliability of scientific methodology is that: the theoretical statements which assert the specific causal connections or mechanisms by virtue of which scientific methods yield successful predictions are approximately true.

NMA is a philosophical argument which aims to defend the reliability of scientific methodology in producing approximately true theories and hypotheses. Its strength, however, rests on a more concrete type of explanatory reasoning which occurs all the time in science. It can be stated as follows. Suppose that a background theory T asserts that method M is reliable for the generation of effect X in virtue of the fact that M employs causal processes C1,…, Cn which, according to T, bring about X. Suppose, also, that we follow T and other established auxiliary theories to shield the experimental set-up from factors which, if present, would interfere with some or all of the causal processes C1…, Cn, thereby preventing the occurrence of effect X. Suppose, finally, that one follows M and X obtains. What else can better explain the fact that the expected (or predicted) effect X was brought about than that the theory T— which asserted the causal connections between C1,…, Cn and X—has got these causal connections right, or nearly right? If this reasoning to the best explanation is cogent, then it is reasonable to accept T as approximately true, at least in those respects relevant to the theory-led prediction of X. To be more precise, more is needed for the acceptance of T as relevantly approximately true. For instance, T is to be contrasted with available alternative hypotheses, and should emerge as the best explanation. T should also offer a ‘good enough’ explanation in its own right, e.g. an explanation which can adequately account for all salient features of the experimental facts.3 But such considerations are part and parcel of these more concrete applications of explanatory reasoning in science. And although we may not always be in position to choose a hypothesis as clearly the best explanation, that does not entail that we never are. The relation between this more concrete type of explanatory reasoning in science and the NMA should be clear: successful instances of such reasoning provide the basis (and the initial rationale) for this more general abductive argument. However, NMA is not just a generalisation over scientists’ abductive inferences. Although itself an instance of the method that scientists employ, NMA aims at a broader target: to defend the thesis that Inference to the Best Explanation, or abduction (that is, a type of inferential method), is reliable. The (first-order) instances of

explanatory reasoning involve the claim that it is reasonable to accept that particular theories are relevantly approximately true. NMA is, then, based on these instances to defend the more general claim that science can deliver theoretical truth. NMA is a kind of meta-abduction. The explanandum of NMA is a general feature of scientific methodology—its reliability for yielding correct predictions. NMA asserts that the best explanation of why scientific methodology has the contingent feature of yielding correct predictions is that the theories which are implicated in this methodology are relevantly approximately true. So, what makes NMA distinctive as an argument for realism is that it defends the achievability of theoretical truth. But how exactly does this argument defend IBE and hence how exactly does NMA become the pivot for a realist epistemology of science? As I have noted, it suggests that the best explanation of the instramental reliability of scientific methodology is that background theories are relevantly approximately true. These background scientific theories have themselves been typically arrived at by abductive reasoning. Hence, it is reasonable to believe that abductive reasoning is reliable: it tends to generate approximately true theories. This conclusion is not meant to state an a priori truth. The reliability of abduetive reasoning is an empirical claim, and if true is contingently so. Having said this, let me stress that NMA should be suitably qualified. There is enough historical evidence to persuade any bonafide realist, first, that scientific theories have encountered many failures as well as successes and, second, that some past theories which once were empirically successful and were accepted as 'best explanations' of the evidence were subsequently abandoned as inadequate and false. In light of this, the realist argument should be qualified in two respects:

1 The realist argument should acknowledge the existence of failures. Their actuality does not impair scientific methodology. Nor does it sever the explanatory link between approximate truth and empirical success especially novel empirical success. Clearly, the fact that I have occasionally failed to find my lost keys does not entail that a thorough search of the places where they could have been left is not a reliable method for finding lost keys. In any case, realists should concentrate on particular theory-led successes—and there are very many of those—and argue that it is these successes that require explanation. It is, after all, a salient feature of scientific methodology that it does lead to empirical successes. Things could be otherwise, and scientific theories might have been total failures. So, to ask how it is possible at all that scientific theories yield correct predictions, especially novel ones, and to offer explanations of this contingent feature of scientific methodology are essential for understanding science. (The notion of novelty in prediction, to which realists should appeal, is analysed in Chapter 5.) 2 The realist argument should become more local in scope. Accordingly, the main realist point should be the following: although most realists would acknowledge that there is an explanatory connection between a theory's empirical success and its being, in some respects, right about the unobservable world, it is far too optimistic—if at all defensible— to claim that everything the theory asserts about the world is thereby vindicated.

So, realists should refine the explanatory connection between empirical and predictive success, on the one hand, and truth-likeness, on the other. They should assert that these successes are best explained by the fact that the theories which enjoyed them have truth-like theoretical constituents (i.e. truth-like descriptions of causal mechanisms, entities and laws). The theoretical constituents whose truthlikeness can best explain empirical successes are precisely those which are essentially and ineliminably involved in the generation of the predictions and the design of the methodology

which brought these predictions about. From the fact that not every theoretical constituent of a successful theory does and should get credit from the successes of the theory it certainly does not follow that none do (or should) get some credit. If, on top of that, it is shown that, far from being abandoned, the theoretical constituents of past theories which did essentially contribute to their successes were retained in subsequent theories of the same domain, then the realist case is as strong as it can be. In Chapter 5 this point is explained in detail, since the argument just expressed captures in a nutshell the way in which I try to block the argument from the 'pessimistic induction'. From this point onwards I assume that the above considerations constitute the intended reading of NMA. EDR has caused a heated discussion among philosophers of science (cf. Laudan 1984; McMullin 1987 and 1991; Musgrave 1988; Newton-Smith 1987; Lipton 1991). As already noted, the main line of criticism is that EDR is viciously circular. Since it employs IBE, critics suggest that it therefore presupposes what needs to be shown —that IBE is a reliable inferential method. Arthur Fine (1986; 1986a; 1991) has summarised and defended this line in the most forceful way. He points out that the realist is 'not free to assume the validity of a principle whose validity is itself under debate' (1986a: 161). As he has put it elsewhere, an IBE-based defence of realism lacks any argumentative force since it employs 'the very type of argument whose cogency is the question under discussion' (1991:82). Fine concludes that 'there is, in general, no rational defence of realism' (1986a: 163). But Fine has also put forward two more objections. Let us suppose, he says, for the sake of the argument, that abduction is reliable. It would not be wise for realists to use an abductive argument in their defence of realism, since they must demand more stringent methods of proof of their philosophical doctrines (cf. Fine 1986:114). At any rate, he notes, there are better instrumentalist explanations of the success of science (Fine 1986a: 154). In what follows I explore some new and systematic ways in which realists can attempt to block the foregoing objections.

EDR and circularity To call an argument viciously circular is to level an epistemic charge which indicates that the argument in question cannot, and perhaps should not, be persuasive since it in some way assumes, or postulates, that which needs to be independently shown. A typically circular argument is one in which the conclusion is either identical to or a mere paraphrase of one of its premisses. Note, however, that the mere fact that a premiss is identical to the conclusion is not sufficient ground for attributing vicious circularity. To show that an argument is viciously circular one should not just look at the sentences employed in the argument, but also take account of what the argument presumes to show by its use of the specific sentences. So, for instance, if we look only at the sentencestructure involved in it, the argument-type 'a & b, therefore b & a' is circular. But it is not viciously circular since, I take it, it purports to show only the commutativity of logical conjunction. Similarly, the argument-type 'p, therefore p' should not be deemed viciously circular if it is meant to show that every sentence is a logical consequence of itself. But it would be viciously circular were it meant to show that p is true. For then it would pretend to prove that p is true where it just assumes that p is true. What is necessary in order for an argument to be correctly judged viciously circular is that the argument should purport to offer reasons for accepting a certain sentence (the conclusion), where (one of) the reasons cited is that sentence itself. Following Braithwaite (1953), one may call viciously circular arguments 'premiss-circular'. In the latter, one claims to offer an argument for the truth of α , but explicitly presupposes α . in one's premisses. Such an argument has no probative force for anyone who does not already accept that α . is true.

In his attempt to defend an inductive vindication of inductive learning from experience, Braithwaite (1953:274–278) also noted that there is a type of circular argument which is not premiss-circular. On the surface level, the argument is as non-circular as anything can be. It begins with the premisses P1, …, Pn, and then, by employing an inference rule R, it draws a certain conclusion Q. However, Q has a certain logical property: it asserts or implies something about the rule of inference R used in the argument, in particular that R is reliable. Braithwaite called this argument-type 'rule-circular'. In general, rulecircular arguments are such that the argument itself is an instance of, or involves essentially an application of, the rule of inference vindicated by the conclusion. Braithwaite took it that rule-circularity was not vicious. I think this is correct. There are a few relevant differences between premiss-circularity and rulecircularity. The conclusion of a rule-circular argument is not one of the premisses. Nor is the argument such that one of the reasons offered for the truth of the conclusion is the conclusion itself. Hence, to say the least, rule-circular arguments are not obviously viciously circular. The case of rule-circular arguments has been defended, in connection with induction, by Braithwaite (1953), van Cleve (1984) and Papineau (1993). But, first appearances aside, there is a residual suspicion that rule-circular arguments are vicious. Before I try to disperse this doubt, I want to show that NMA is, if anything, a rule-circular argument. As we saw in the last section, the premisses of NMA assert the theoryladenness of scientific methodology and its widely accepted instrumental and predictive success. Then, by means of a meta-IBE, the argument concludes that the background theories are approximately true. Since these approximately true theories have been typically arrived at by first-order IBEs, this information together with the conclusion of the meta-IBE entail that IBE is reliable. So, the truth of the conclusion of NMA is (part of) a sufficient condition for accepting that IBE is reliable. NMA is clearly not premiss-circular. The conclusion of the meta-IBE (that theories are approximately true) is not among the premisses of the argument. In fact, no assumption about the approximate truth of theories is made within the premisses, either explicitly or implicitly. Besides, there is no a priori guarantee, as clearly there would have been if this argument were premisscircular, that the conclusion of NMA will necessarily be that theories are (approximately) true. The conclusion is true, if at all, on the basis that it is the best explanation of the premisses, but it might not have been the best explanation. As we shall see, this point is implicitly conceded by the critics of NMA, since they take pains to argue that there are better explanations of the success of science. By arguing that the conclusion of NMA need not be the intended realist conclusion, they acknowledge implicitly that NMA is not premiss-circular. Let us now examine in some detail whether rule-circularity is, nonetheless, vicious. How could it be? The thought here might be that in a rule-circular argument one has to assume the reliability of the rule invoked in the argument.

But if this assumption is based on the prior acceptance of the conclusion of the rule-circular argument, then the proponents of a rule-circular argument apparently traffic in a vicious circle. For they would have to prove the conclusion before they accepted the rule used to derive it. But they could not prove the conclusion unless they first accepted the reliability of the rule. I want to reply to this objection by denying that any assumptions about the reliability of a rule are present, either explicitly or implicitly, when an instance of this rule is used. Nor should the reliability of the rule be established before one is able to use it in a justifiable way. This is controversial. But here I am in good company. Externalists in epistemology have argued for this extensively (see Goldman 1986). The point is the following. When an instance of a rule is offered as the link between a set

of (true) premisses and a conclusion, what matters for the correctness of the conclusion is whether or not the rule is reliable that is, whether or not the contingent assumptions which are required to be in place in order for the rule to be reliable are in fact in place. If the rule of inference is reliable (this being an objective property of the rule) then, given true premisses, the conclusion will also be true (or, better, likely to be true—if the rule is ampliative).5 Any assumptions that need to be made about the reliability of the rule of inference, be they implicit or explicit, do not matter for the correctness of the conclusion. Hence, their defence is not necessary for the correctness of the conclusion. In order to highlight the point just made, let us envisage the following situation. Suppose that, in a fashion analogous to a Turing test, we come across a certain 'inference machine' and we start playing a game with it. We feed it with several sets of true premisses and ask it to draw conclusions from them. Suppose also that in all (or most) cases the 'inference machine' draws true conclusions. To say the least, we would conclude that the 'inference machine' is (or is likely to be) reliable. We would also think that the 'inference machine' must operate according to some rules of inference in such a way that when the premisses are fed in it activates a rule and draws a conclusion. But qua machine, the 'inference machine' makes no assumptions about the rules it activates. It just activates them. And, given the success of the 'inference machine' in drawing true conclusions, can we protest that we should first identify the rules it activates, prove that they are reliable, and only then accept that the 'inference machine' is reliable? I think this would be unreasonable and, in any case, counterproductive. If the 'inference machine' started producing consistently false conclusions, we would have reason to start worrying. But in their absence, worrying is unnecessary.6 Pursuing the previous example, one might object that the issue is more complicated if we think, as we should, of reasoners as 'conscious inference machines'. For, the objector might note, the defence of the reliability of the rule of inference does matter for the justification that the reasoner might have for taking the conclusion to be correct (or, likely to be correct). This is really the point on which the allegedly vicious nature of rule-circularity turns. For whether or not the proof of reliability is required for justification will most likely depend on the epistemological perspective which one adopts. As is well known, externalist accounts sever the alleged link between being justified in using a reliable rule of inference and knowing, or having reasons to believe, that this rule is reliable. On such accounts, if the rule is reliable, then it thereby confers justification on a conclusion drawn using this rule, insofar as the premisses are true. Hence, given externalism, all we should require of a rule-circular argument is that the rule of inference employed be reliable; no more and no less than in any ordinary (first-order) argument. A rule-circular argument would be no more vicious than any other first-order application of the rule involved in it. Since first-order applications are not vicious, nor is the second-order application involved in the rule-circular argument. What is special with rule-circular arguments is what the conclusion says. It asserts that the rule of inference is reliable. But the correctness of this conclusion depends on the rule being reliable, and not on having any reasons to think that the rule is reliable. No less than the conclusion of any first-order ampliative argument, the conclusion of a rule-circular argument will produce a belief, this time about the rule of inference itself. This belief will be justified if the rule is reliable. But, if we keep with externalism, it is the truth of this belief and the (objective) reliability of the rule which generated it that matter. Justification requires no more than reliability and truth. Rival internalist accounts of justification suggest that justification requires something over and above the fact, if it is a fact, that the rule is reliable, viz. knowing (or

justifiably believing) that the rule of inference involved is reliable. So, if one took an internalist approach, then a separate justification of the reliability of the rule would be required for the overall warrant the reasoner might have for taking a belief issued by the rule to be true. On this understanding of justification, rule-circular arguments might appear to be vicious. For it seems that believing the conclusion of the rule-circular argument would be necessary in order to justifiably use the rule involved in it the first place. Hence, internalists would be likely to require an independent justification of the rule—that is, a justification of the kind that a rule-circular argument cannot possibly offer. So, the issue of whether rule-circular arguments are vicious turns on the theory of justification one adopts. Realists should have to be externalists if they take NMA seriously. And their critics will have to argue for internalism, if the charge of vicious circularity is to go through. Given an externalist perspective, NMA does not have to assume anything about the reliability of IBE. Consequently, it does not have to assume anything about the reliability of IBE that anyone else (the critics of realism, in particular) denies. To be sure, the proponents of NMA have to assume an externalist theory of justification that some critics of realism might deny. But that is a different matter. That battle can be fought on general epistemological grounds which have nothing to do with the issue of circularity.

The point just made may give rise to further objections. One such might be that, even if we grant externalism, NMA does rely on the assumption that IBE is reliable. For, if the NMA does not presuppose or assume this, why should it employ an IBE in its defence of realism? Why not rely on some other type of inference? And if NMA does rely on this assumption, realists surely need to defend it in an independent way, would they not? Another objection might be that, if externalism is assumed, why should realists bother to offer NMA in the first place? By offering this argument, do they not implicitly assume that we need reasons to believe in the reliability of IBE? That is, do they not grant what the internalists have argued for all along? Let us take these objections in turn. Providing the answer to the first is a straightforward matter; but the second objection will not be met without some more work. Why should NMA rely on an IBE in its defence of realism? Does that not imply that it assumes IBE to be reliable? I do not think it does. If one knew that a rule of inference was unreliable, one would be foolish to use it. This does not imply that one should first be able to prove that the rule is reliable before one uses it. All that is required is that one should have no reason to doubt the reliability of the rule—that there is nothing currently available which can make one distrust the rule. The defenders of NMA are ‘guilty’ of something: we would not use IBE if we had reasons to consider it unreliable. But we have no such reason. There is nothing vicious in admitting all this. If someone denied that abduction is reliable, they should have to give some reasons why this is so. This debate can go on independently of the issue of circularity. It will turn on arguments which aim to show that IBE should not be trusted. (Such arguments will be dealt with in Chapter 9.) But an analogy, due to Frank Ramsey (1926 [1978:100]), will bring the present point home. It is only via memory that we can examine the reliability of memory. Even if we were to carry out experiments to examine this, we would still rely on memory: we would have to remember the outcomes of the experiments. But there is nothing vicious in using memory to determine and enhance the degree of accuracy of memory. For there is no reason to doubt its overall reliability. Let us now focus on the second objection above: by offering the NMA, are realists not implicitly offering reasons to believe in the reliability of IBE? And, if so, should not these be independent reasons? I have two points against this objection.

1 The objection misunderstands what the NMA aims to do. NMA does not make IBE reliable. Nor does it add anything to its reliability, if it happens to be reliable. It merely generates a new belief about the reliability of IBE which is justified just in case IBE is reliable. 2 But, suppose we granted that NMA aimed to defend the reliability of IBE. This is certainly not excluded by externalism. It is just optional. Would the mere fact that the defence relies on a rule-circular argument make the attempted defence vicious—and hence lacking in rational force? I do not think so. If the rule-circularity of a defence is taken to be an outright vice, then we should simply have to forgo any attempt to explain or defend any of our basic inferential practices. What this implies is that even internalist defences, ultimately, will have to rely on rule-circular arguments. When it comes to the defence of our basic modes of reasoning, both ampliative and deductive, it seems that we either have no reasonable defence to offer or else the attempted defence will be rule-circular.

This dilemma shows up already in the case of deductive inference. It goes back to Lewis Carroll and his 'What the tortoise said to Achilles' that one cannot prove the soundness of modus ponens unless one ultimately employs modus ponens. We need modus ponens (and other deductive rules) because we need truth-preserving rules of inference—rules such that, whenever the premisses of an argument are true, the conclusion is also true. But can we prove that modus ponens is truth-preserving? The best we can do is to prove a meta-theorem that modus ponens in the object-language is truth-preserving. This meta-proof, however, requires that the meta-language already has modus ponens (or other deductive rules) as a rule. Intuitively, the idea is that any kind of proof (even the proof that modus ponens is truth-preserving) requires some rule of inference in order for it to go through. In the case of modus ponens, the required rule must also be truth-preserving. But do we not need a proof that this rule is truthpreserving? And so on. A typical reply, expressed vividly by Salmon (1965:54), is that we should trust modus ponens because we do not have any reason to doubt that it is truth-preserving: we can 'reflect' on instances of modus ponens and realise the inconceivability of the situation in which all of the premisses are true and the conclusion is false. Whether this is exactly right is still debatable. Van McGee (1985) and William Lycan (1994), for instance, have suggested that there are counter-examples to modus ponens. That is, there are instances of arguments which instantiate modus ponens, and yet have true premisses and a false conclusion.7 I do not want to enter this interesting debate here, but the typical response to these counter-examples shows that the defence of the soundness of modus ponens is a far from trivial (and presuppositionless) exercise. The typical reply to these counter-examples, discussed by Kornblith (1994), is that if we just define modus ponens using the standard meaning of the logical connective for conditional statements of the form 'p q', (where the conditional is true either when the antecedent is false or the consequent true), then there is no room for counter-examples: any purported counter-example is dismissed on the grounds that it should not be formalised as a purported instance of the schema {p; p → q; therefore q}. The issue here is not whether this dismissal is correct (Lycan 1994a, for instance, doubts that it is). Rather, the issue is that no justification of modus ponens is possible which does not rest on some presuppositions. All we can do is engage in a process of explanation and defence. By reflecting on modus ponens (and other deductive rules we use), we aim to systematise it, to explain to ourselves the ways in which we should use it, and to show that, given the meaning of the logical connectives and the truth-tables, it delivers its goods—it is truth-preserving.8 A similar, if more complicated, situation arises when it comes to inductive reasoning. Inductive rules are non-truth-preserving. However, it is wrong to

apply deductive standards to inductive reasoning. While deduction is concerned with truth preservation, induction is concerned with learning from experience. The fact that induction is not deduction shows nothing other than that each should be treated as a distinct mode of reasoning. But how can the very possibility of rational learning from experience be defended, if not by a rulecircular argument? Carnap's work can help us address this issue in a systematic way. Carnap's major problem was to establish which kinds of inductive argument in his systems of inductive logic are valid, in the sense that they license conclusions with high inductive probability (or degree of confirmation). In particular, he wanted to find out which among a number of ampliative rules (straight rule, Laplace's rule, c*, c†, etc.) can best represent inductive learning from experience. But, we all know that one cannot defend the validity of inductive arguments without using some form of inductive reasoning. Reflecting on this question, Carnap (1968: 265–267) suggested that the circularity involved in an attempt to vindicate inductive reasoning is both indispensable and harmless. Here is a reconstruction of his argument.

Reasoners are either inductively blind—where 'inductively blind' refers to reasoners who make no inductive inferences and who are not disposed to make any—or they are not. If the reasoners are inductively blind, then we cannot possibly show them when an argument is inductively valid and when it is not. For learning to discriminate between these two cases, and therefore learning to recognise inductively valid arguments and to discard invalid ones, requires an 'inductive intuition'. This intuition should not be confused with the Cartesian idea of an infallible source of knowledge. Rather it should be scen as some sort of disposition to use inductive reasoning and to fallibly recognise that an argument is inductively valid. If there were such (unfortunate) inductively blind persons, they would be inductively blind precisely because they lack this disposition to learn from experience. When it comes to our attempts to persuade them why learning from experience is reasonable, we can rely only on some inductive argument—we have to rely on the past successes of inductive reasoning. What we are doing is indispensable, because no other argument could show them that learning from experience is reasonable. Yet being engaged in rule-circular reasoning also is harmless because, being induction-blind, nothing could persuade our interlocutors to reason inductively. If, on the other hand, the reasoners are not inductively blind—if they already operate within a network of dispositions to learn from experience—it is also both indispensable and harmless to engage in rule-circular reasoning in an attempt to explain to them the circumstances under which an inductive argument is or is not valid. It is indispensable because no noninductive argument is available, and it is harmless because, in this case, it is an instance of a self-clarificatory procedure. So, in either case, in our attempt to vindicate learning from experience, being engaged in rule-circular reasoning is both indispensable and harmless. The situation is totally analogous to the defence of deductive reasoning. There is no way in which one can persuade a deductively blind person of the soundness or rationality of deductive arguments. However, all those who operate in a network of deductive intuitions—e.g. who have internalised the meaning of the logical connectives, etc.—can be made to discriminate between valid and invalid arguments.

Carnap's argument suggests a wholly new perspective on the issue of what exactly we do when we offer arguments in defence of our basic inferential practices. In one sense, no inferential rule carries an absolute rational compulsion, unless it rests on a framework of intuitions and dispositions which takes for granted the presuppositions of this rule (truth preservation in the case

of deductive reasoning, learning from experience in the case of inductive reasoning, searching for explanations in the case of abductive reasoning). When we attempt to vindicate or defend certain rules of inference (e.g. certain deductive, inductive or abductive rules), this is not because we want either to justify them without any assumptions, or to prove that they are rationally compelling for any sentient being. It is because we want to evaluate our existing inferential practices: to reflect on the rules we use or are disposed to use uncritically, and to examine the extent to which and in virtue of what these rules are reliable. Such evaluations cannot be made from a neutral epistemological standpoint. They, too, have to employ some methods. In the final analysis, we just have to rely on some basic methods of inquiry. The fact that we make recourse to rule-circular arguments in order to defend them, if defence is necessary, is both inescapable and harmless.9 By parity of reasoning, if one is disposed to reason abductively one should have no special problem with using NMA in defence of the reliability of IBE. NMA is no worse than attempts to defend modus ponens and inductive rules. In fact, the class of reasoners who use abductive reasoning is much broader than the class of committed realist epistemologists who reflect on the reliability of IBE and defend it by offering the NMA. This class will most certainly include non-realists—those who do not take sides on the realism debate. But it will also include those critics of realism who employ abduction, but disagree with the conclusion of NMA, the thesis that scientific theories are approximately true. As I noted above, that this class is not empty follows from the fact that at least some critics of the realist NMA try to show that there are better potential explanations of the success of science than the realist one. If sound, NMA can have rational force for all of them.

So, NMA has not been shown to be viciously circular. That being so, I do not know what the problem with NMA is. In any case, Fine (1986:115) is mistaken in maintaining that NMA is 'of no significance'. Fine has, however, launched another criticism against EDR, what he calls 'a deep and…insurmountable problem with the entire strategy of defending realism' (1986:114). He grants, for the sake of the argument, that EDR may be successful in convincing someone who already employs abductive reasoning about the truth of realism. Then he asks: 'should that not be of some solace, at least for the realist?' (ibid.: 117). Fine thinks that EDR should give no comfort to realists. For one must demand that the proofs of one's meta-theories be more stringent than the proofs in one's theories. To this end Fine appeals to Hilbert's programme of showing the consistency of mathematical theories by using only the most stringent and secure means—in particular, means which fall outside the proof-theoretic tools of the theory under consideration. Fine argues:

Hilbert's idea was, I think, correct even though it proved to be unworkable. Metatheoretic arguments must satisfy more stringent requirements than those placed on the arguments used by the theory in question, for otherwise the significance of reasoning about the theory is simply moot. I think this maxim applies with particular force to the discussion of realism. (1986:114)

From a naturalist viewpoint, it is of great relevance to the debate if a requirement has proved to be utopian. It is plain from Goedel's second incompleteness theorem that there cannot be a stringent proof, in Hilbert's sense, of the consistency of Peano arithmetic. In particular, any consistency proof for such an axiomatic formal theory is—at least in some sense—less elementary than the formal methods which the axiomatic theory formalises. Hilbert's requirement might be in principle

correct. Yet, it is unreasonable to demand that a philosophical theory must satisfy a requirement that mathematics, with an accurate notion of proof and a strict and rigorous deductive structure, fails to satisfy. Fine's demand (1986:115) that a realist theory of science employ 'methods more stringent than those in ordinary scientific practice' is unnaturally strong and unnaturally non-naturalistic.

Are there better explanations of the success of science? What needs to be shown also is that NMA's conclusion is indeed the best explanation of the instrumental success of science. This is crucial because otherwise NMA cannot adequately defend the reliability of abduction; moreover Fine has argued that there is a better non-realist explanation of the success of science. In fact, Fine (1986a: 154) defends the rather bold thesis that anything which realists can do instrumentalists can do, and in a better way. Fine's claim is that some notion of instrumental reliability of scientific theories best explains the success of science, where 'instrumental reliability' is a feature of scientific theories in virtue of which they are 'useful in getting things to work for the practical and theoretical purposes for which we might put them to use' (1991:86). However, Fine's strategy faces a general problem. Suppose that he uses IBE in order to infer the truth of instrumentalism. Then he seems to admit that abduction is reliable, yet it just happens that, contrary to what realists expect, realism is not the best explanation of the success of science: rather, instrumentalism is. But then Fine would have to concede that abduction is reliable. So Fine's use of IBE must be different. It should not, that is, be seen as an inference to the truth of the best explanation—the latter being, according to him, that science is instrumentally reliable. In fact, Fine has spoken of 'an instrumentalist version of the inference to the "best" explanation' (1991: 83). This version should still favour the best explanation, but it should assert that the best explanation is empirically adequate rather than true. Instrumentalism would get accepted as empirically adequate, à la van Fraassen. Yet there would still, I think, be a problem. For even if instrumentalism were shown to be the best explanation of the instrumental success of science, it could not be more empirically adequate than realism. Realism and instrumentalism are equally empirically adequate. They both entail the empirical success of science. And note that for most instrumentalists empirical adequacy is the only epistemic virtue of a potential explanation—the only feature that contributes to its beliefworthiness qua explanation. If Fine accepted this common instrumentalist tenet, then even if instrumentalism were a better explanation of the success of science, it would be no more belief-worthy than realism, since they would be equally empirically adequate. If, however, Fine thought that certain explanatory virtues could, alongside their empirical adequacy, make one explanation more beliefworthy than another, then he would move away from an instrumentalist version of IBE and would defend instrumentalism only at the cost of conceding a major point to realism, viz. that explanatory virtues are ultimately epistemic virtues. Let me, however, leave aside these qualms and focus on the central question: is the instrumentalist explanation of the success of science better than the realist one? Fine (1986a: 153–154; 1991:82–83) contrasts two forms of (simplified) abductive explanations of the success of science:

(a) Science is empirically successful Science is empirically successful .·. (probably) theories are instrumentally reliable .·. (b) (probably) theories are approximately true

Fine suggests that pattern (a) is always preferable to (b) on the grounds that if the explanandum is the empirical success of scientific methodology, then we do not need to inflate the potential explanation with 'features beyond what is useful for explaining the output' (1991:83). So Fine thinks 'the instrumentalist, feeling rather on home ground, may suggest that to explain the instrumental success we need only suppose that our hypotheses and theories are instrumentally reliable' (1991:82–83). I think Fine's argument rests on the hidden assumption that an appeal to the (approximate) truth of background scientific theories goes beyond the features that are useful for explaining the instrumental success of science. In his essay 'Unnatural Attitudes' (1986a: 153), he has in fact suggested that admitting anything more than instrumental reliability 'would be doing no explanatory work'. His argument goes like this. When realists attempt to explain the success of a particular theory, they appeal to the approximate truth of a theoretical story as the best explanation of the theory's success in performing certain empirical tasks. But if this explanation is any good at all, they must 'allow some intermediate connection between the truth of the theory and success in its practice. The intermediary here is precisely the pragmatist's reliability' (1986a: 154). So, Fine suggests, the job that truth allegedly does in the explanation of the success of a theory is actually done by this intermediate pragmatic reliability. Truth seems explanatorily redundant. Moreover, if pragmatic reliability is substituted for truth in the realist account of success, one gets an alternative account in terms of instrumental reliability (ibid.: 154). Fine concludes: 'since no further work is done by ascending from that intermediary to the realist's "truth", the instrumental explanation has to be counted as better than the realist one. In this way the realist argument leads to instrumentalism' (ibid.). On the basis of this argument, Fine proves a meta-theorem: 'If the phenomena to be explained are not realist-laden, then to every good realist explanation there corresponds a better instrumentalist one' (ibid.). There are two strange aspects to Fine's argument.

1 It is not at all obvious that there is anything like a pragmatic notion of reliability which realists have to take into account in their explanation of the success of science. Between successful empirical predictions and theories there are methods, auxiliary assumptions, approximations, idealisations, models and probably other things. Let us suppose that this stuff is what Fine calls the 'pragmatic intermediary'. Let us also suppose that these things alone could be summoned to account for the empirical success of a theory. Would this make claims concerning the truth of the theory explanatorily superfluous? Surely not. For one also wants to know why some particular model represents successfully the target physical system whereas others do not, or why one model represents the target physical system better than others, or why the methods followed generate successful predictions, or why some idealisations are better than others, and the like. When realists argue for the approximate truth of background scientific theories, they, in effect, want to explain the success (or instrumental reliability) of this intermediary stuff. Approximate truth would be summoned in order to explain the successful constraints which theories place on model-construction as well as the features of scientific methods in virtue of which they produce successful results. So, if Fine meant this stuff when he spoke of a pragmatic intermediary between the (approximate) truth of theory and its success in practice, the existence of this pragmatic intermediary would not render approximate truth explanatorily superfluous. 2 Even if we assume that there is some other pragmatic notion of reliability to be interpolated between approximate truth and empirical success, and even if we equate this notion with Fine's instrumental reliability,

that it has any real explanatory import would be open to doubt. Instrumental reliability is nothing but a summary statement of the fact that the theory performs successfully practical tasks. If we then try to explain the theory's empirical success by saying that background theories are instrumentally reliable, we simply paraphrase what needs to be explained. It is immaterial whether we phrase the explanandum as 'Theories are successful' or as 'Theories are instrumentally reliable'. No explanation is thereby offered, only a paraphrase of theories' success in terms of theories' instrumental reliability. The situation here is totally analogous with an attempt to 'explain' the fact that hammers are successful in driving nails into a wall by saying that hammers are instrumentally reliable for nail-driving. Recall that what is at stake is whether an instrumentalist explanation is better than the realist one. It turns out that, despite all the manoeuvring, it is not an explanation at all.

Fine has implicitly recognised that instrumental reliability is a rather poor explanation. For he has recently (1991) suggested a way to make claims of instrumental reliability potentially explanatory. He has outlined a dispositional understanding of the instrumental reliability of science. On this view, instrumental reliability involves a disposition to produce correct empirical results. Fine claims that this dispositional explanation of the success of science is 'an explanation of outcomes by reference to inputs that have the capacity (or "power") to produce such [i.e. instrumentally reliable] outcomes' (1991:83). This new understanding of instrumental reliability is potentially explanatory: it accounts for empirical success by an appeal to a capacity, or disposition, that theories have in virtue of which they are empirically successful. Although certainly in the right direction, this account is incomplete. Not because there are no dispositions, or powers, in nature, but rather because one would expect also an explanation of why and how theories have such a disposition to be instrumentally reliable; in particular an explanation that avoids the troubles of Moliére's 'explanation' of why opium sends somebody to sleep in terms of its 'dormitive power'. Is it a brute fact of nature that theories—being paradigmatic human constructions—have the disposition to be instrumentally reliable? This seems hardly credible. If dispositions of this sort need grounding, then there is an obvious candidate: the property of being approximately true would ground the power of scientific theories to be instrumentally reliable. Since Fine would certainly deny this account, he owes us an alternative story of how this disposition is grounded. Else, should this disposition need no grounding, he needs to show how can this be so. I conclude, then, that Fine has failed to prove his meta-theorem in favour of instrumentalism. The realist account is the best overall explanation of the empirical success of science.

Could we not just deflate our quest for explanation? There is an aspect of the intuitive epistemic thrust of Fine's critique of realism with which I have not yet dealt: that somehow 'going beyond the data' to posit 'theoretical entities' is more problematic than abandoning some forms of intuitively attractive abductive reasoning. A defender of Fine's critique of realism in particular might suggest that a deflationary account of explanation as licensing retrodiction and prediction might do just as well, without taking extra risks about theoretical commitments. Here is how. Suppose that someone accepts the foregoing distinctions between premiss-circularity and rulecircularity as well as the existence of abduetive, or explanatory, intuitions. He might, therefore, acknowledge the prima facie force of the demand for an explanation of the reliability of scientific methodology. But instead of accepting the realist's explanation, he identifies explanation with

retrodiction and prediction, and offers the following (Quinean) second-order induction about abduction as an epistemic justification of abductive practices in science: past abductive inferences have generated empirically successful theories; hence, based on a second-order induction, it is reasonable to expect that abductive inferences will keep providing empirically successful theories. So he concludes that one can be equipped with inductive generalisations about the instrumental reliability of abductive scientific methodology on the basis of which one can predict or retrodict the instrumental reliability of scientific methodology in particular cases. But, he stresses, these inductive generalisations do not commit one to the existence of unobservable entities, nor do they entail that abductive reasoning is a reliable guide to theoretical truth. All that they entail is that one can rely on abductive reasoning to get instrumentally reliable theories, but nothing more. I shall call this 'the induction-about-abduction' move. I think this move is in the spirit of Fine's dispositional account of instrumental reliability discussed at the end of the previous section. In fact, the suggested inductive generalisations about the instrumental success of scientific methodology might be offered as a way to ground claims about the disposition of this methodology as instrumentally reliable. Two responses, which work in tandem, are available. First, that these generalisations do not really explain why scientific methodology is reliable; and, second that these generalisations are not free of theoretical commitments. Let us take them in turn. Take the (second-order) generalisation that abductive reasoning generates instrumentally reliable theories. Let us call it A. A can be paraphrased as the conjunction of the following two claims:

A1: abductive reasoning has generated instrumentally reliable theories in the past and present; and
A2: abductive reasoning will generate instrumentally reliable theories in the future.

Now remember what needs to be explained: the instrumental reliability —past, present and future—of scientific theories. It is, then, not difficult to see that A1 & A2 is merely a paraphrase of what needs to be explained. More specifically, we can question whether this generalisation, as it stands, is suitable for prediction and retrodiction. If we use A(=A1 & A2) to predict a future instance of instrumental reliability, we need to assume that A (= A1 & A2) is already wellconfirmed, which means that we need to assume what is really at issue: that A, on its own provides good inductive evidence for A2. What exactly makes it the case that A, supports A2? It may well be the case that hitherto instrumentally reliable theories fail when they are extended in new domains; unless, of course, we assume that they are truth-like. This appeal to truth-likeness would explain why theories are (or tend to be) instrumentally reliable, and would also warrant the projection to future instrumental reliability. On the other hand, if we use A (= A1, & A2) to retrodict the past instrumental reliability of scientific theories (A1,), we will have to appeal, implicitly, to their future reliability (A2), a fact as much in need of explanation and grounding as is A1. In any case, positing the approximate truth of scientific theories would offer a more satisfactory and highly non-trivial way to predict and retrodict their instrumental reliability: it is in virtue of theories being approximately true that we can

• retrodict their instrumental success in certain cases; • predict future successes; and • confirm the generalisation that abductive reasoning generates empirically successful theories.

This last claim would be in accord with the confirmation of empirical generalisations in scientific practice. Empirical generalisations are considered well confirmed mainly when they are embedded

in larger theoretical structures which explain how the properties involved in the generalisation co-vary and how the generalisation gets connected with other well-supported ones. A framework which is (approximate) truth-linked plays precisely this role when it comes to the explanation of the instrumental reliability of scientific methodology and the instrumental successes of scientific theories.

At any rate, it is highly dubious that the 'induction-about-abduction' move can altogether avoid theoretical commitments. Boyd has in fact considered a similar objection to his attempt to defend the reliability of abductive reasoning (cf. 1984:68–70; 1985:236–241). The point is straightforward. Prior to performing the induction on past empirically successful scientific theories, we must naturally accept that instrumental success constitutes evidence for the truth of the inductive generalisations about observables made by these theories. But this judgement is not independent of all theoretical commitments. From myriad generalisations that involve observables, scientists pick only some as genuinely empirically supported and confirmed. Their choice is theorydependent: theories suggest connections between hitherto unrelated observable phenomena; they determine which predicates are projectible, and which collections of individuals form natural kinds. But if ordinary judgements concerning inductive generalisations about observables involve theoretical commitments, any attempt to have an induction-about-abduction that is free of theoretical commitments will be seriously impaired.10

Can Darwin help? Van Fraassen has offered a different explanation of the success of science. It is this:

The success of science is not a miracle. It is not even surprising to the scientific (Darwinist) mind. For any scientific theory is born into a life of fierce competition, a jungle red in tooth and claw. Only the successful theories survive—the ones which in fact have latched on to actual regularities in nature. (1980:40)

On this account, there is no surprise in the fact that current theories are empirically successful. For the Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest has operated. Current theories have survived because they were the fittest among their competitors—fittest in the sense of latching on to universal regularities. Clearly, this is an elegant and simple explanation of the fact that current theories are successful. But does it undermine the realist explanation? If we unpack van Fraassen's story, we find that it is phenotypical: it provides an implicit selection mechanism according to which entities with the same phenotype, i.e. empirical success, have been selected. But a phenotypic explanation does not exclude a genotypic account: an explanation in terms of some underlying feature which all successful theories share in common; a feature which has made them successful in the first place. The realist explanation in terms of truth provides this sort of genotypic account: every theory which possesses a specific phenotype, i.e. it is empirically successful, also possesses a specific genotype, i.e. approximate truth, which accounts for this phenotype. In order to see the point more clearly, compare van Fraassen's story with this (due to Peter Lipton): Each in a group of people has red hair. This is no surprise; but is explained by the fact that this group is comprised of members of the club of red-haired persons. (The club is, in a sense, a mechanism which selects only persons with red hair.) But this observation does not explain why George (or, for that matter, anyone of them taken individually) has red hair. A different, most likely genetic,

story should be told about George's colour of hair. Notice here that the realist explanation is compatible with van Fraassen's Darwinian account. Yet, the realist's is arguably preferable, because it is deeper. It does not stay on the surface—that is, it does not just posit a selection mechanism which lets through only empirically successful theories. It rather tells a story about the deeper common traits in virtue of which the selected theories are empirically successful. As Lipton (1991:170ff.) has suggested, there is another reason for preferring the genotypic to the Darwinian explanation: all that the phenotypic explanation warrants is that theories which have survived through the selec tion mechanism have not yet been refuted. There is no warrant that they will be successful in the future. Any such warrant must be external to the phenotypic story. For instance, this warrant can come from a combination of the phenotypic explanation with the principle of induction. On the other hand, the genotypic explanation has this warrant up its sleeve: if a theory is empirically successful because it is true, then it will keep on being empirically successful. To sum up, then, there are no better explanations of the success of science than the realist one. Not that the discussion so far has exhausted all arguments levelled against IBE and its role in the realism debate. More is to come on this in Chapter 9, when I discuss van Fraassen's position. Additionally, there is a seemingly powerful argument against NMA which needs to be rebutted. It is the so-called 'pessimistic induction', enunciated by Laudan. Its thrust is that NMA cannot possibly be taken seriously because it flies in the face of the (alleged) fact that the history of science is the graveyard of supposed 'best explanations' of the evidence.

Naive Realism by Hilary Putnam

The idea that the mass of mankind is quite mistaken in thinking that the colors, textures, and other "secondary properties" of the objects they claim to perceive are "out there," in the things themselves, when they are really just our own "sense data" is an old one. For Russell it was quite clear when he wrote The Problems of Philosophy in 1912 (and still clear in 1940, even after a fl irtation with direct realism in The Analy sis of Mind), that we do not observe physical objects at all. He wrote, When, in ordinary life, we speak of the color of the table, we only mean the sort of color which it will seem to have to a normal spectator from an ordinary point of view under usual conditions of light. But the other colors which appear under other conditions have just as good a right to be considered real; and therefore, to avoid favoritism, we are compelled to deny that, in itself, the table has any one par tic u lar color. About ten pages later, Russell has shown to his satisfaction that the table we see lies in our own private visual space, and the table we feel lies in our own private touch space, and so on. And furthermore, we do not perceive the external, physical, table at all:

My knowledge of the table as a physical object, on the contrary, is not direct knowledge. Such as it is, it is obtained through acquaintance with the sense data that make up the appearance of the table . . . There is no state of mind in which we are directly aware of the table; all our knowledge of the table is really knowledge of truths, and the actual thing which is the table is not, strictly speaking, known to us at all.

Finally, our knowledge of the table must be via inference:

Thus it becomes evident that the real table, if there is one, is not the same as what we immediately experience by sight or touch or hearing. The real table, if there is one, is not immediately known to us at all, but must be an inference from what is immediately known. Hence, two very diffi cult questions at once arise; namely, (1) Is there a real table at all? (2) If so, what sort of object can it be?

Nor is the Russell view wholly dated. Although phi los o phers who will say that what we perceive are our own sense data are no longer thick on the ground, there are respected contemporary phi los o phers who deny that colors are "real" (Larry Hardin, for example), and if colors are not real, then much of what we take ourselves to see is not there to be seen!

Moreover, a search of the Internet under "naive realism" will reveal that quick "refutations" of naive realism, many of them two or three centuries old, are all over the place. For example, If naive realism is to be taken seriously, and colors are out there in the world, then apples regularly change color depending on how much light is around them. It is much more plausible, though, to think that the apples are the same as they ever were, that all that has changed is our experience of them.

This refutation assumes that the naive realist cannot maintain that dispositions to have certain appearances to human beings cannot be "out there in the world." In fact, even naive realists would include dispositions to have certain a certain look depending on the lighting conditions and the position of the viewer among the objective properties of the objects viewed.

Yet today there are phi los o phers who are proud to call themselves naive realists. Obviously, this new use represents a reaction against views like Russell's. And clearly the "externalism" that I argued against earlier represents a sort of return to naive realism, as does my own call in The Threefold Cord for a "second naiveté" in the philosophy of perception. But rather than try to survey all the contemporary views that represent (more or less) a defense of naive realism, what I shall do for a moment is look at Russell's position and see at what points a defender of any degree of return to naive realism might reject it.

Russell's Position Again

In the previous quotations from The Problems of Philosophy, the following propositions are obviously assumed to be true:

(1) We perceive our sense data. (But the man and woman on the street mistakenly think that what they are perceiving are physical things.)

(2) We don't actually perceive physical objects.

(3) What we know about physical objects we know by inference.

The premises for those inferences come from observing our own sense data.

Some Ways of Rejecting Russell's Picture

It is easy to find grounds for rejecting one, two, or all three of these Russellian propositions, but, as we shall see, some of the ways of rejecting them hardly do justice to what William James called the "natural realism" of the ordinary person. Many of those ways amount to little more than an

appeal to ordinary usage— not a bad thing when it is just one of a number of points made in a philosophical discussion but hardly a satisfactory response by itself to a deeply thought out and complex metaphysical cum epistemological position such as Russell's.

For example, one might reject proposition 1 by saying, "We don't perceive visual 'sense data,' we have them." And one might then reject proposition 2 by saying, "When we have the appropriate visual sense data, and we unconsciously and automatically infer that there is a table in front of us, then that is what we ordinarily call 'seeing a table.' " Obviously, this is not a rejection of Russell's metaphysical picture at all but simply a recommendation that Russellians fi nd a way of expressing their view that is more charitable to ordinary ways of speaking. However, propositions 2 and 3 would be rejected by some phi los o phers on more in ter est ing (and controversial) grounds: a widely held view today is that the justifi cation of observational beliefs, at least about such fundamental sensible properties as color, shape, texture, hardness, and the like, is simply a "reliabilist" one; we have been programmed by evolution so that when any of those beliefs is caused by impacts on our sense organs (an event that reliabilists identify with perceiving the objects, when the causal chain is of the right sort), the belief is very likely to be correct.

This "reliabilist" ground for rejecting propositions 2 and 3, unlike the "ordinary language" grounds for rejecting propositions 1 and 2, does involve a serious disagreement with Russell's metaphysics; today's naturalistic reliabilists (rightly in my view) see perception as beginning with external things, and transactions involving both those things and the organism, and not with "sense data"; but it would theoretically be possible to produce a version of reliabilism more friendly to at least part of Russell's picture. I can imagine a philosopher who simply replaces "caused in the right way by impacts on our sense organs" with "caused in the right way by appropriate sense data," leaving it an open empirical question whether the "right sort" of causation is inference (perhaps unconscious inference, as Helmholtz believed).

Another common ground for rejecting propositions 1, 2, and 3 is the so- called transparency of perceptual experience. Here is how Block, who accepts the view as a description of part of the phenomenology of perception, describes it in "Wittgenstein and Qualia":

Shoemaker's view is shared by Fred Dretske, Gilbert Harman, Michael Tye and many others who advocate what G. E. Moore termed the diaphanousness (or sometimes the transparency) of experience. Harman puts the point by saying that the more one tries to attend to one's experience of the tree, the more one attends to the real tree instead. Although Moore is sometimes cited as the originator of this point, he did not actually accept it. I have heard him quoted saying "the moment we try to fi x our attention upon consciousness and to see what, distinctly, it is, it seems to vanish: it seems as if we had before us a mere emptiness. When we try to introspect the sensation of blue, all we can see is the blue; the other element is as if it were diaphanous." But these words are followed by what I regard as a more significant truth: "Yet it can be distinguished if we look attentively enough, and know that there is something to look for.

Any inference from it seems to us that we attend to "the real tree" to "we actually perceive the real tree" would, of course, be questioned by Russell, and with reason. The "diaphanousness" of (much of) perceptual experience is simply a fact about the phenomenology of perceptual experience, but

accepting it as such is not sufficient to overthrow or even present a clear alternative to Russell's picture.

Critique of Pandeism by Dan Danna

Preface

This text was initially prepared under the title "An Atheist Critique of Pandeism," an invited chapter for Pandeism: An Anthology, (John Hunt Publishing, 2016). The critique applies equally to creationism in general, and is presented here for readers whose interests lie beyond pandeism.

Pandeism posits a creator-deity that became the universe itself upon its creation. As such, it is perhaps the most elemental creationist theology, sidestepping anti-evolution, "intelligent design," and other post-creation arguments favoring religion.

In debunking pandeism by means of recent findings in cosmology and astrophysics, this readerfriendly article for the intellectually curious non-scientist also effectively debunks all forms of theistic creationism.

In doing so, it convincingly exposes the falseness of supernaturalism, regardless of which religion is its partner in delusion.

An Atheist Critique of Pandeism

A complete definition of pandeism may be found elsewhere in this anthology. For the purpose of this critique, I will use this definition from Wikipedia: The belief that a creator deity became the universe and ceased to exist as a separate and conscious entity.

As such, pandeism is a presuppositional theory attempting to explain the beginning of existence, the presupposition being that existence had a beginning at all. Here, "existence" is differentiated from "the universe," and the Big Bang is differentiated from "the beginning of existence," as will be discussed below. My view that pandeism is an erroneous theory rests on three contentions, which I shall elaborate:

1. There is no evidence that a creator deity ever existed.

2. Pandeism is not compatible with science.

3. Pandeism, like ordinary theism, arises in part from the human inability to fathom the dimensions of infinite time and infinite space.

Virtually every human culture in history has invented religions, deities, afterlife myths, and creation myths to explain the mysteries they encountered in their time. Harvard biologist E. O. Wilson estimates that over the past 60,000 years humans have devised roughly 100,000 religions based on roughly 2,500 gods. The great majority of these religions are now extinct, having no contemporary adherents. The religion of the ancient Greeks, which is now taught in educational institutions as "Greek Mythology," is the extinct religion perhaps best known to our readers.

Pandeism differs from today's popular religions in that the deity is no longer believed to exist in a conscious or active form. Hence, it is not a personal god with whom the faithful may communicate via prayer and other channels. Pandeism does, however, hold that a conscious deity once existed that imbued the universe with its intelligence and other sentient qualities.

A problem that pandeism shares with other religions is that no empirical evidence has been found by scientific means that any deity has ever existed. The major extant religions rely on purportedly divinely inspired "holy books" as proof of the truth of their beliefs, which is fallacious circular logic. (I recall a cartoon photo of a paper table napkin with the hand-written inscription, "The napkin religion is the one true religion because it says so here on this napkin.")

A listing of over fifty religions and their sacred texts may be found at the Wikipedia page on religious texts. Of course, not all these religions can be true, since many of their doctrines are mutually incompatible – for example, some are monotheistic whereas others are polytheistic. And, not all their holy books could possibly have been divinely created, since different (and often disagreeing) gods are believed to have inspired them. Clearly, at most, only one of these religions can possibly be entirely true. Further, if all but one are not true, as logic dictates, then it is likely that none are true. After all, how confident can a believer be that one's religion, being one of many thousands, happens to be the one true religion considering the fact that no religion is supported by any empirical evidence whatsoever? Therefore, all but the most fundamentalist believers recognize the fallibility of so-called sacred texts as evidence of the factuality of their beliefs.

Of course, pandeism has no divinely inspired sacred text, and so its adherents' faith in the creator deity is based on other premises. Their worldview depends on a priori principles of pure (intuitive) reason to derive their belief that a creator deity once existed, and then the deity became the universe itself. The history of philosophy is littered with the carcasses of beliefs derived through pure reason, the most famous of which may be certain elements of Kantianism itself, the philosophy of Immanuel Kant who originated the term "pure reason" in 1781 (six years before "pandeism" would first be mentioned, by one of Kant's own countrymen). For example, Kant believed in God only to the extent that he reasoned that morality deductively requires belief in God. Secular humanists vigorously assert, with overwhelming supporting evidence, that morality and social ethics are untethered to religious belief, and indeed are regularly practiced by nonbelievers; hence, the common humanist refrain "Good without god(s)."

I will leave to other contributors to this anthology the task of elaborating the a priori principles (assumptions) from which belief in pandeism's creator deity is derived. Those assumptions will be apparent in their arguments for the existence of the deus. Being familiar with Christian apologetics, I recognize that the language of science is used disingenuously to support the tenets of their faith, as shown in teleological arguments for "Intelligent Design" and other presuppositional attempts to logically prove the factuality of Christian theology. In my view, pandeism falls victim to (or is the result of) similarly flawed logic. I'm sure my co-contributors will fervidly rejoin with opposing views to this assertion.

To better understand pandeism in preparation for this writing, I posed three questions to Knujon Mapson, the editor of this anthology. (In our prepublication correspondence, Mr. Mapson

disclaimed being an “official” representative of pandeism, although he is perhaps its most vocal proponent.) Here is my first question and his answer.

DD: Question 1: Who/what created the creator? Or, did the creator not exist in time and space prior to creation?

KM: Answer (his capitalizations are retained): If a Creator is to be posited, it indeed follows that this Creator must either have itself come into existence through some spontaneous process that did not require a Creator, or was itself intentionally created by an Ur-Creator, or simply exists eternally without origin.

Our esteemed editor acknowledges that his answer is speculative, as no evidence is available to support any of the three alternatives he offers. Indeed, no empirical evidence is even conceivable that would assist us in selecting one of the three possibilities he provides. Rather, those alternative solutions are derived from the a priori assumption that the creator deity existed. Further, to my empirically oriented (“show me the evidence”) mind, none of the three alternatives is remotely plausible. Therefore, the question of what preceded the existence of the creator remains unanswered, and is, I believe, unanswerable if a scientifically plausible response is required. That is, the a priori principle of existence of a creator deity is unsupported by evidence or by logic, and is therefore a false assumption.

Some readers may be reminded of an anecdote reported by cosmologist Stephen Hawking in his 1988 book A Brief History of Time:

A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: "What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise." The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, "What is the tortoise standing on?" "You're very clever, young man, very clever," said the old lady. "But it's turtles all the way down!"

So, it seems that pandeism shares a common conundrum with theistic religions: Where did God come from? If we are to avoid the tortured circular reasoning of Christian apologists, and if we require at least a modicum of plausibility, given the utter absence of any supporting empirical evidence, it is hard to escape the reasoned conclusion that God (or some other creator deity by any name) does not, and did not ever, exist.

Mr. Mapson buttressed his answer by pointing out that time is nonlinear, and that time may have also begun at the moment of creation of matter. Time is indeed a variable dimension of spacetime affected by gravity, as confirmed by empirical tests of Einstein’s theory of general relativity. So, its inconstancy may be (wrongly) considered by proponents of pandeism to be supportive of the notion that the creator deity created itself at the moment of creation of matter and energy. Indeed, matter and energy are interchangeable quantities according to the formula E=mc2 where the speed of light (c) is constant. Cosmologists and particle physicists, such as Lawrence Krauss, describe the Big Bang as pure energy, with matter (in the form of subatomic particles) coming into existence

within a miniscule fraction of a second thereafter. Further, Krauss states that time itself came into existence at that moment as well, insofar as time is a function of motion of particles in the primordial universe.

Scientists who support the notion of a multiverse, such as astrophysicist Coel Hellier, argue that our universe may be only one among many, or more likely an infinite number, separated by hyperdistance, scattered throughout infinite space (see the semantic discussion of space vs. existence below), entirely out of contact with each other. Admittedly, the concept of a multiverse is speculative, and probably can never be confirmed empirically, although Hellier's philosophical argument is compelling. Moreover, the dimensions of infinite time and space are beyond our limited human powers of imagination. It is instructive to note, however, that Krauss, Hawking, Tyson, Weinberg, Greene, Randall, Hellier, and the great majority of other prominent cosmologists are self-identified atheists who do not find it necessary to posit a creator deity to account for the beginning of our universe. So, it may be a bit presumptuous of laymen (relative to the fields of cosmology and astrophysics) to insist otherwise. Indeed, a survey of members of the National Academy of Sciences found that 93% are atheist or agnostic. How is it that the most accomplished scientists regard the notion of deities to not be useful in their disciplined search for understanding the natural world and its origin?

Here is my second question to Mr. Mapson.

DD: Question 2: By what physical mechanism(s) did the creator manufacture the material universe? Or, did the creator not exist prior to the creation/Big Bang, at which time particle physics as we now know it began to take form?

KM: Answer: We don't know, but the answer will be discoverable by science. But it does seem something had to exist, or else there'd be no reason for there ever to be a change in the status quo of nothing existing.

As cosmologist Lawrence Kraus discusses in his book A Universe From Nothing, the laws of physics, as they operate in our universe, appeared concurrently with the Big Bang, not before it. Those laws are known as the Standard Model, which identifies electromagnetism, the weak and strong nuclear forces, and classification of all known subatomic particles. Indeed, in the conjectured multiverse, other universes may contain "matter," the form and nature of which may be quite different from matter and energy as they appear in our local universe and may operate under different physical processes than those observed in our universe.

Normal (i.e., observable) matter comprises only about 5% of the mass of our universe, the remainder being dark matter and dark energy. These "substances" (perhaps not a suitable term, since little is known about their physical properties) interact with gravity, but not with light. That is, dark matter cannot be visually detected with telescopes, but it does produce observable effects on the motion of stars, galaxies, and other massive objects.

It is plausible, albeit highly speculative, that dark matter and dark energy are associated with a separate universe that originated in a separate Big Bang, that is co-located with ours in space, and that is operating under different laws than the Standard Model that describes normal matter and

energy. Or, if science develops instruments capable of empirically observing dark matter and dark energy, which are invisible to our existing technology, the Standard Model may be revised to include additional particles or forces that would define these phenomena as derived from our Big Bang and therefore a part of our universe.

In any case, dark matter and dark energy do not conform to the current Standard Model. So, speculatively, another Big Bang that created a different universe might operate under different physical laws, which would have come into existence at that universe's moment of creation. The physical nature of dark matter and dark energy constitutes one of the great mysteries that cosmologists and physicists are currently studying.

So, we see that "existence" may not be limited to our local universe, which did indeed begin with the Big Bang. Other universes quite likely exist, as Hellier argues. Consequently, the beginning of existence, which pandeism attempts to explain by positing a creator deity, is an irrelevant concept if one accepts that time, as well as space, are infinite in dimension and may contain an infinite number of universes.

Perhaps "distance" or some other term would be more suitable than "space" in this context, since, as Krauss argues, space itself was created with the Big Bang and will continue to expand eternally. He explains that, since space, even where devoid of matter and radiation, contains quantum mechanical processes and dark energy – it is not "nothing." So, the hyper-distant regions between universes are not the same empirically observable "empty space" that exists within our universe.

Envisioning "nothing," not even so-called empty space, challenges our frail human imagination, as does the infinite dimensions of spacetime. Nevertheless, if the multiverse exists, as is probable, then absolute nothingness between universes probably also exists. To the extent that we are capable of imagining this nothingness, we can imagine that the Big Bang created the matter, energy, time, and space that constitute our universe.

Existence ("all that exists"), then, encompasses all universes plus whatever lies between them, which is not to be confused with "empty space" as it appears within our particular universe. Further, it may not be physically possible for anything, such as light, to penetrate or travel through that inter-universe medium, ensuring that each universe remains isolated from all others. Science allows such speculation, so long as supernaturalism is not introduced. After all, science is the study of nature. Pandeism, a theology that presupposes a nonmaterial supernatural creator deity, is a demonstrably unscientific theory of existence.

A review of various multiverse theories. may assist readers in mulling the incomprehensible scale of infinite spacetime and the fathomless nothingness (not even the "something" of empty space) between universes. Note that these are science-based speculations, not theological renderings of the mysteries of existence. Since science does not anticipate ever being capable of direct empirical observation of other universes, multiverse theories will no doubt remain speculations. Future advances in science, however, will surely refine those speculations.

My conclusion, as well as that of all but a very few professional cosmologists, is that the conditions present at the moment of the Big Bang – which have existed throughout infinite time and infinite

space, possibly containing an infinite number of universes – were quite capable of creating our home universe 13.72 billion years ago without the midwifery of deus.

As mind-stretching as the concept of infinite spacetime may be, it is nevertheless more plausible, and more consistent with known science, than is a creator deity. Gods are best understood as man-made inventions arising from our pre-science ancestors' attempts over millennia to explain the otherwise inexplicable mysteries of their earth-bound environment. Otherwise, we face the even more daunting task of explaining, without resorting to mysticism, what happened before the beginning of time, and what lies beyond the edge of space. Which of these two universe-views, dear reader, is your conclusion? Empiricism or mysticism? Reason or mythology? I see no third option. I see no hybrid.

Here is my third and final question to Mr. Mapson.

DD: Question 3: Is/was the creator "supernatural"? Or, are/were the principles of particle physics (the natural world) at work within the "entity" of the creator? Or, is/was the creator a non-material being prior to creation of the universe? If the latter, in what sense did the creator "exist" prior to creation?

KM: Answer (capitalizations are his): If it exists, it is bound by some laws – of mathematics and logic, at least – though not necessarily all the laws which govern our Universe. There are aspects of our Universe (the specific speed of light, the ratios of certain particle sizes) which scientists have debated could be different in alternate Universes, so the question really is, what characteristics must persist in any Universe. And there we'll find what governs any Creator.

Physicists and others working in the natural sciences consider anything that exists, whether or not it is yet discovered, to exist in the natural world, which is comprised of physical matter, including subatomic particles so far identified in the Standard Model. That is, nothing exists that has no physical properties. For example, humans do not have a "soul" apart from the biological processes occurring within the physical body. Similarly, "consciousness" is nothing more than the subjective experience of bioelectrical processes within a living brain. When the brain ceases to function, as when the body that houses it dies, consciousness ceases. Consequently, there is no conscious afterlife and no soul that survives physical death. To be sure, the abiogenetic origin of life is a yetto-be fully understood process, and is a subject of active research, but there is no scientific basis for thinking that life or consciousness is a supernatural phenomenon that functions outside the laws of science.

My third question to Mr. Mapson above asks whether pandeism holds that the creator deity was an entity composed of physical matter. Or, alternatively, do pandeists believe that the creator was supernatural, having no physical properties. If the former, then the deity is part of the natural universe and therefore must be comprised of physical properties consistent with the Standard Model, and so is subject to research by the scientific method. If the latter, we must utterly reject the notion of a supernatural deity, since the evolving Standard Model describes and defines all that is natural.

The supposed creator deity is believed by adherents of pandeism to have possessed consciousness and intelligence. Absent physical properties, such attributes are scientifically impossible.

I shall close this critique with a brief rebuttal of three additional notions advanced by proponents of pandeism to support their creationist worldview.

Fortuities and the fine-tuned universe

Apologists for pandeism, and for creationism more broadly, argue that certain improbable "fortuities" constitute compelling evidence for the existence of a creator deity. Several examples are proferred of "fine tuning" of the laws of physics and other cosmological conditions that, if significantly different from their existing values, would render the universe structurally dysfunctional and make carbon-based life impossible. These conditions include the ratio of the strength of electromagnetism to the strength of gravity and the ratio of dark energy to the density of the universe. Astrophysicist Martin Rees cites these and other technical features of the physical structure of the universe as so improbable that a conscious and intentional creator must have designed it to allow life to appear. (Interestingly, professor Rees has more recently stated, "I've got no religious beliefs at all.")

Although some scientists, such as Rees, support the fine-tuning hypothesis, most do not, arguing instead that the universe is not fine-tuned to us; rather, we are fine-tuned to the universe. That is, humans, and all other life forms, exist only in the conditions in which it is possible for us to exist. If our universe were fatally unaccommodating to life, then life would not exist here. We happen to reside where life is possible; hence we are here to ask these questions. There is no support for a cosmic mandate that life must exist, in our universe or in others.

Cosmologist Victor J. Stenger, author of The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning: Why the Universe Is Not Designed for Us, explains how the "strong anthropic principle" distorts perception by causing human observers to assume the universe exists for the special benefit of humans, when in fact the universe is simply the way it is. We humans happen to be compatible with the miniscule niche of spacetime in which we find ourselves, where we were suited to evolve, to currently exist, to observe ourselves, and to reflect upon our own existence. This is quite a simple notion, actually, once we cease insisting that we are on the cosmic center stage.

Why does the universe exist?

Pandeism attempts to answer this question by positing a conscious creator deity who had a desire or intention to create the universe.

It is human nature to wonder why. "Why did you say that?" "Why did that accident happen to me?" "Why was I born?" But asking "why" is the wrong question in scientific inquiry, except in some social-psychological research. "Why" presupposes an intention, which in turn presupposes a conscious entity that has a purpose for its actions. As Lawrence Krauss explains in A Universe From Nothing, the more useful question is how: "How did the universe come into existence." "How will it end?"

Cosmologists have yet to achieve consensus about how the universe will end. A Big Crunch, in which the universe collapses under force of gravity into a singularity (a zero-dimensional point of infinite density), was the leading contending theory until dark energy was discovered in the 1990's. Dark energy (an apparently repulsive gravitational force) accounts for the increasing rate of acceleration of expansion of the universe. Eternal expansion is now considered more likely. Time, as a mathematically measurable dimension, might indeed end if the Big Crunch were to be our universe's fate, since presumably there would no longer be matter-in-motion, although current physics is inadequate to explain what happens at or near a singularity. But, infinite spacetime would remain, possibly containing other universes, under either outcome. Theology in general, and pandeism in particular, contributes nothing to our understanding of this question, nor to its answer.

So, the scientifically appropriate answer to "Why does the universe exist?" is: There is no reason, there is no purpose. No conscious creator deity had an intention that led to creating the universe.

Supernaturalism

Pandeism claims that the creator deity existed prior to creating the physical properties of the material universe, or at least appeared concurrently with it.

Supernaturalism is the mystical belief that entities exist beyond empirically observable reality, outside the laws of nature, specifically the Standard Model of particle physics.

Prior to the advent of modern science, generally ascribed to the work of Galileo in the early 17th century, humans had few observational and analytical tools for determining what is "real." The ancient Greeks made an attempt at empirical understanding of reality by proposing earth, water, air, and fire as the four elements of the natural world. Microscopes, telescopes, astral spectroscopes, the Large Hadron Collider, and a multitude of other data-gathering tools have since been developed that dramatically increase our ability to "see" nature beyond the human scale.

Two obstacles impede popular acceptance of scientism as the most authoritative approach to acquisition of knowledge:

1. Insufficient science education among the global population,

2. The psychological propensity of humans to invent religions and other forms of mysticism

I recognize that scientism is controversial, criticized by some as excessive dependence on science and the scientific method. To be sure, personally meaningful insights can and do occur through music, art, and other non-scientific endeavors. And the impacts of such endeavors on subjective human experience can be, and are, studied scientifically. But if one's goal is to understand objective reality, apart from human subjectivity, science represents the only valid approach to achieving it.

Religious believers who regard faith alone, without empirical evidence, as sufficient for belief in their particular creation story, gods, afterlife myth, spirits and other supernatural beings, conveniently ignore many settled scientific facts and, by logical necessity, refute scientism. I have long been baffled that reason and unquestioned faith can co-inhabit an intelligent, educated mind

– perhaps an unrecognized sleight-of-mind bridges the dissonance. Darrel Ray examines in The God Virus: How Religion Infects Our Lives and Culture how mystical beliefs propagate within a host culture and impair rational thought by means that are curiously analogous to viral infection in living organisms. As with biological viruses, the "God virus" can infect intelligent, well-educated people as it does those of us who aspire to the 50th percentile, although not as markedly.

Pandeism, in positing a creator deity, is a form of supernaturalism, notwithstanding pandeists' belief that the creator became the natural world once the act of creation occurred. It follows that if the now-defunct deity is not describable by the physics that describes the universe we find today, as pandeists appear to acknowledge, the belief is incompatible with science.

My purpose in this article is to encourage science-based critical thinking among adherents of pandeism and of religion in general. I regard science and religion as inherently incompatible because they put forth mutually inconsistent theories of existence. I anticipate that as further scientific discoveries advance our knowledge of the natural world, religion will recede as a harmful presence in human affairs. I readily admit, however, that pandeism is perhaps the least harmful religion yet invented.

Naturalistic origins of theism and origins of hierarchy by Damien Marie AtHope

Primate Death Rituals

Non-human primates like apes and monkeys seem to have an awareness of death in the same way humans do, scientists have said. On the left is a gorilla who holds her dead baby's body on her back. This is similar to the chimp on the right who carries the remains of her dead baby's body who died 17 days earlier on her back. "After analyzing over 200 years worth of research into how primates deal with death, they found common behaviors emerged—including carrying their dead, defending the deceased from threats and exhibiting a grief-like response." "For example, a BBC documentary in 2017: Spy Monkey Mistaken for Dead Baby and Mourned by Troop appeared to show a group of langur monkeys grieving for what they believe is a dead baby—even though it was actually just a robotic spy monkey." "The same year, scientists observed a chimpanzee using tools to clean the body of a deceased group member. A female sat down with the dead male and used a firm stem of grass to clean his teeth. The practice, researchers say, suggests chimps may have a more sophisticated response to death than we currently know. Andre Gonçalves from Japan's Kyoto University and Susana Carvalho from the University of Oxford in the U.K. say there is a huge amount of anecdotal evidence relating to they way non-human primates deal with death—but a review of the literature to find specific characteristics and behaviors has been lacking." "For the past two centuries, non-human primates have been reported to inspect, protect, retrieve, carry or drag the dead bodies of their conspecifics and, for nearly the same amount of time, sparse scientific attention has been paid to such behaviors," they wrote in a study published in Biological Reviews. In their analysis of 240 reports, Gonçalves and Carvalho showed that specific responses emerge among different non-human primate species. Often this involves carrying the dead around—especially mothers and their dead babies. Species that are unable to grasp objects—such as lemurs and tamarins—are observed trying to carry their dead even though

they lack the ability." "Researchers have long suspected that chimps and other apes might engage in similar behavior, but they very rarely observe the death of a chimp in the wild, says Richard Byrne, a psychologist at the University of St. Andrews in the United Kingdom. Zoos usually separate dying individuals from fellow chimps, he adds, making observations of their responses very difficult. In Pansy's case, zookeepers decided to allow the other chimps to stay with her as she died, while a research team, led by psychologist James Anderson of the nearby University of Stirling, observed their reactions." "In a second example of chimpanzee grieving, a research group led by Dora Biro, a zoologist at the University of Oxford in the U.K., observed two chimp mothers carrying the remains of their dead infants for weeks. The observations were made in the forests of Bossou, Guinea, where primatologists have been studying wild chimps for 3 decades. In 2003, an epidemic of respiratory disease broke out at Bossou, killing five chimps. Two were infants, 1-year-old Jimato and 2-year-old Veve. The mothers of the infants carried their dead bodies around on their backs for 68 and 19 days, respectively, even as they dried out and became mummified. They brushed flies away from the babies, groomed them regularly, and allowed other chimps—including other young animals—to poke at the bodies, lift their limbs, and even carry them around for short distances." "In the case of Pansy, Anderson and his colleagues conclude that the other chimps reacted to her death in humanlike ways, experiencing grief and mourning. "Some of the behaviors appear strikingly similar to aspects of human responses to death and dying," Anderson says, adding that many researchers have considered such reactions to be unique to humans. Christophe Boesch, a primatologist at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, says that his team has observed similar behavior among chimps at Tai Forest in the Côte d'Ivoire and agrees that "we have certainly underestimated awareness of death in chimpanzees." "The Bossou study is more difficult to interpret, researchers say, because it is not clear whether the mothers realized that their infants were truly dead. "It's extremely difficult to make any claims either way," Biro says. "We only have access to behavior, not to internal mental states." But Byrne, who once observed a gorilla carry her dead baby around for 3 days in the mountains of Rwanda, points out that hospitals and doctors are increasingly giving the parents of a deceased infant the option of remaining with the body of their child for hours or even days before giving it up for burial, as a way of aiding the grieving process. Anderson hopes the Pansy episode will encourage zoos to do the same."

Chimpanzees Sacralizing Trees?

There is evidence currently limited to West Africa where chimpanzees mainly adult males but also females or juveniles are observed creating a kind of shrine of accumulated stone piles beside, or inside trees as well as regularly visiting these trees picking up these stones and then throwing them at these trees accompanied with vocalization "performativity" which is (speech, gestures) to communicate an action. Chimpanzees have been observed engaging in "social learning," both teaching and learning such as tool use as well as communication signals: vocal and gestures. Such social learning is seen as playing an important and unique role in the development of human language, culture, and mythologizing. All together such things observed in these West Africa where chimpanzees could indicate some kind of what could be perceived as magical thinking or at least quasi-magical thinking in the sacralizing of trees as it does not seem connected to some utilitarian or food foraging practice of which rocks or tools would make sense. This at first may

sound too complex for a nonhuman animal but what needs to be understood is that chimpanzees have been known to exhibit "metacognition," or think about thinking. Also, chimpanzees have the greatest variation in tool-use behaviors of any animal, second only to humans, where humans seem to have magical thinking or irrational beliefs are hardwired in our brains at a very ancient level because they involve mentally-fabricated patterns of thinking. Moreover, such processing abilities are somewhat common among non-human primates if not lower mammals as well to some extent and can be seen as a part of evolutionary survival fitness and thus not uniquely human. It can be thought that different emotions evolved at different times with fear being ancient care for offspring relatively next later followed likely by extended social emotions, such as guilt and pride, evolved among social primates. Why this could be important is it is believed that emotions evolved to reinforce memories of patterns adding to survival and reproduction as well as responses to internal or external events and in such remapping facilitated by emotions could involve mentally-fabricated patterns of thinking which could superstitionize things in the world that do not truly limit it to the way it is possibly adding a kind of animism or the like involving some amount of magical thinking such as sacralizing of trees. Magical thinking such as beliefs that there are relationships between behaviors or sounds thought to have the ability to directly affect other events in the world. Whereas quasi-magical thinking is acting as if there is a false belief that action influences the outcome, even though they may not really actualize or intentionally hold such a belief. Now I doubt West African chimpanzees are fully mythologizing the trees to a human magical thinking extent but we can see some possibilities of what about them could be inspired by magical thinking. Magical thinking may lead to a type of causal reasoning or causal fallacy that looks for meaningful relationships of grouped phenomena (coincidence) between acts and events. Moreover, magical thinking when applied to trees is significant as believed sacred totems and natural sacred representations in many of the world's oldest myths possibly because of using magical thinking when observing the growth and annual death and then a revival of their foliage, seeing them as symbolic representations of growth, death, and rebirth. As well as trees may be conceived as existing in three realms the underworld or death with the roots the world of the living the trunk existing in our world above the ground and its branches reaching to the heavens thus existing in the realm of the spirits, ancestors or gods.

Australopithecus afarensis Death Ritual?

13 individuals young and old seen as a possible ritual arrangement of dead Australopithecus afarensis at Site AL -333 in Hadar Ethiopia "Site AL -333, commonly referred to as the "First Family", is a collection of prehistoric hominid teeth and bones which are estimated to be about 3.2 million years old. The discovery of all of the fossils at AL 333 aligned close together in one geological stratum is an obvious sign that they died at about the same time. The unique grouping of such a large number of individuals in the same place and at virtually the same time has led to much speculation over the cause of death" "Hadar, Ethiopia village is known for the nearby archaeological digs which have yielded some of the most well-known hominin fossils, including "Lucy" (3.2 million years old)" "Australopithecus afarensis is an extinct hominin that lived between 3.9 and 2.9 million years ago in Africa, more specifically they have only been discovered within Eastern Africa"

RELIGION AND RITUAL IN THE LOWER AND MIDDLE PALAEOLITHIC

Pre-modern hominins such as Australopithecus, Paranthropus, and Homo help us see the evolution that lead to us and the later thinking and behaviors we think are only special too us.

"As the emergence of the archaeological record (currently recognized in East Africa ~2.6 million years ago) relates to changes in carcass butchery for which systematic creation of simple tools of stone was employed, the distinction between 'Palaeolithic' and 'Pre-Palaeolithic' hominins though this has no meaning in the context of religion, though it gives the increasing recognition of simple stone tools among primates and symbolic thinking or behavior." "At first sight, religion and its associated habitual and often elaborate rituals, might be seen as maladapted to the evolutionary world; it is costly and does not have an immediate material return. Cognitive scientists, however, stress that an awareness of the supernatural and the emergence of religion, occurred as converging by-products of cognitive and emotional mechanisms that evolved under natural selection for mundane adaptive tasks. In this sense, 'brains have been disposed by evolution to believe and even evolutionary materialists concede that religion plays a role in human well-being. It is easy to see how these converging mechanisms rapidly came to be used to rationalize or solve existential problems that otherwise have no worldly solution, such as the inevitability of death or the threat of deception by others. Research in this area based on cognitive psychology, neuroscience, cultural anthropology, and archaeology is beginning to reach maturity, and a number of generalizations can now be seen to be shared between all modern religious systems." "The site of Dikika, in Ethiopia, had yielded two bones, each with multiple cut marks, from sediments dated at 3.4 million years old. This evidence pushed back the date for the earliest human meat-eating by 800,000 years—earlier than the advent of genus Homo— thereby jeopardizing the idea that using stone tools to butcher and eat large animals was unique to our genus. These cut marks are the same age as the fossils of Australopithecus afarensis found in nearby deposits at Dikika. The game-changing conclusion of this evidence was that Homo had not been the only meat-eater among human ancestors; Australopithecus had also been capable of butchering and eating animals, if only on rare occasions. Additional support for this claim is seen in 149 stone tools dating back to 3.3 million years ago from the site of Lomekwi, Kenya." "3.4 million years old bones with cut marks like these, made by stone tool cuts, found at Dikika, Ethiopia. 3.3 million years old stone tools from Lomekwi 3 and these are just 2 of 20 stone tools found. These dates predate the genus Homo, suggesting tool making arose with Australopithecus which was found near Lomekwi 3 and evidence of stone tool use by Australopithecus has been suggested on the basis of marks on animal bones. Lomekwi 3 artifacts are not the Oldowan tool making tradition so its pre-Oldowan." 3.3 million years old stone tools from Komekwi-3 and these are just 2 of 20 stone tools with this date denoting a new tool culture Lomekwian. And it's not until Oldowan stone tool types that are seen as truly unmistakable evidence of tool-making dates to 2.6 Million years ago with Oldowan stone tool culture and it first appears in the East African. Then the real advancement is more fully seen in Acheulean dating to 1.76 Million years ago to 130,000 years ago. Acheulean has a long span and likewise did somewhat get refined as it evolved but relatively kept its distinctive oval and pear-shaped "hand-axes" associated with Homo Erectus, then others after them and connected to them. The oldest indirect evidence found of stone tool use is fossilised animal bones with tool marks; these are 3.4 million years old and were found in the Lower Awash Valley in Ethiopia.

Archaeological discoveries in Kenya identifying possibly the oldest known evidence of hominin use of tools to date, have indicated that Kenyanthropus platyops 3.2 to 3.5-million-year-old Pliocene hominin fossil discovered in Lake Turkana, Kenya may have been the earliest tool-users known. The oldest stone tools were excavated from the site of Lomekwi 3 in West Turkana, northwestern Kenya, and date to 3.3 million years old. Prior to the discovery of these "Lomekwian" tools, the oldest known stone tools had been found at several sites at Gona, Ethiopia, on the sediments of the paleo-Awash River, which serve to date them. All the tools come from the Busidama Formation, which lies above a disconformity, or missing layer, which would have been from 2.9 to 2.7 mya. The oldest sites containing tools are dated to 2.6–2.55 mya. One of the most striking circumstances about these sites is that they are from the Late Pliocene, where previous to their discovery tools were thought to have evolved only in the Pleistocene. Excavators at the locality point out that: "…the earliest stone tool makers were skilled flintknappers. The possible reasons behind this seeming abrupt transition from the absence of stone tools to the presence thereof include gaps in the geological record." The species who made the Pliocene tools remains unknown. Fragments of Australopithecus garhi, Australopithecus aethiopicus and Homo, possibly Homo habilis, have been found in sites near the age of the Gona tools. There has also been the discovery in China of the oldest stone tools outside Africa, estimated at 2.12 million years old." Acheulean tools date to about 1.76 million to 130,000 years ago, are typically found with Homo erectus remains and were produced during the Lower Palaeolithic era across Africa and much of West Asia, South Asia, and Europe, and are typically found with Homo erectus remains. It is thought that Acheulean technologies developed from the more primitive Oldowan technology associated with Homo habilis. Homo ergaster or early Homo erectus is the likely the earliest user of Acheulean tools. It appears that Acheulean originated in Africa and spread to Asian, Middle Eastern, and European areas sometime between 1.5 million years ago and about 800 thousand years ago. Later, used by Homo heidelbergensis (the common ancestor of both Neanderthals and Homo sapiens). Tool types found in Acheulean assemblages include pointed, cordate, ovate, ficron, and bout-coupé hand-axes (referring to the shapes of the final tool), cleavers, retouched flakes, scrapers, and segmental chopping tools. Materials used were determined by available local stone types; flint is most often associated with the tools but its use is concentrated in Western Europe; in Africa sedimentary and igneous rock such as mudstone and basalt were most widely used, for example. Other source materials include chalcedony, quartzite, andesite, sandstone, chert, and shale. Even relatively soft rock such as limestone could be exploited. In all cases the toolmakers worked their handaxes close to the source of their raw materials, suggesting that the Acheulean was a set of skills passed between individual groups. From an Excavation 1 level at Wonderwerk Cave that produced evidence of intentional fire-making (wood ash, burnt stone and bone) which dates to ~1.7 Ma ago. Homo erectus ("upright man") depicted with a 1.7 Million years old actual sized Stone Tool. Homo erectus evolved 1.9 million years ago, likely influenced by dramatic climatic changes that occurred 2.8 million years ago, 1.7 million years ago and 1 million years ago that created a drier and more variable environment for the species than what any previous hominid had experienced. And are thought to have lived in a way similar to baboons, favoring smaller foraging groups during the day and larger communities at night for safety. The earliest fossil evidence of Homo erectus dates to 1.8 million years ago (discovered in Dmanisi, Georgia). Homo erectus is a direct ancestor of the later hominins including Homo heidelbergensis,

Homo antecessor, Homo neanderthalensis, Homo Denisova, and Homo sapiens. Different size stone tools where made from different uses. Here is an actual large size artifact from an Excavation 1 level at Wonderwerk Cave that also produced evidence of intentional fire-making (wood ash, burnt stone and bone) which dates to 1.7 Million years ago. By 1.6 million years ago, Homo erectus had spread into Asia and there are fossil finds of this species in China, India, and and Indonesia. Evidence within Wonderwerk ("miracle" in the Afrikaans language) cave has been called the oldest controlled fire. With an unambiguous evidence in the form of burned bone and ashed plant remains that burning events took place in Wonderwerk Cave during the early Acheulean occupation, approximately 1 Million years ago. In Koobi Fora, sites FxJjzoE and FxJj50 show evidence of control of fire by Homo erectus at 1.5 Million years ago. The ability to control fire was a crucial turning point in human evolution, according to a "cooking hypothesis," Homo erectusadapted to a diet of cooked food and therefore were capable of controlling fire. Studies on nonhuman and human primates based on associated trends in body mass, feeding time, and molar size support the hypothesis of the adoption of a cooked diet at least as early as 1.9 Million years ago. Wonderwerk Cave is situated at the base of a low foothill on the eastern flank of the Kuruman Hills in the Northern Cape Province yielding artifacts spanning the past ca. 2.0 Ma years with Early Stone Age (ESA), Middle Stone Age (MSA), and Later Stone Age (LSA) remains.

The Evolution of Fire Sacralizing and/or Worship 1.5 million to 300,000 years ago and beyond?"

The earliest human-controlled fire comes from Koobi Fora and Chesowanja, both in Kenya, small patches of reddened soil were found in areas containing stone tools up to 1.5 million years old. As well as other sites at a little later dates, such as Olorgesailie, show potential evidence that fire was utilized by early humans although this is not evidence of cooked food. Another promising site is a South African cave called Swartkrans, with burned bones in a section dating between 1 million and 1.5 million years ago. Analyzing the bones estimates the temperature had reached at least 900 degrees — too hot for most wildfires, but consistent with a campfire." There also seems to be evidence for hominin carcass processing strategies at 1.5 Ma, Koobi Fora, Kenya. "From zooarchaeological and taphonomic analyses and behavioral interpretations of three ~1.5 million-year-old archaeofaunas from areas 1A and 103 in the Okote Member of the Koobi Fora Formation, northern Kenya: FwJj14A, FwJj14B, and GaJi14. These sites are all located in similar paleoenvironmental contexts, near shallow water with swampy, seasonally flooded areas, and some evidence for more wooded or gallery forest settings. Both individual specimen- and assemblage-level analyses of butchery-marked bones indicate that the hominins appear to have practiced similar butchery strategies at all of these sites, with butchery (defleshing, disarticulation, and marrow extraction) of both high- and low-ranked skeletal elements with no apparent preference for prey size, skeletal region, limb class, or limb portion. Only four tooth-marked specimens, including one likely crocodile-tooth-marked bone, are preserved in all three archaeofaunas. A paucity of limb epiphyses suggests that bone-crunching hyenids may have deleted these portions subsequent to hominin butchery. Strangely, there are no stone tools preserved with the 292 cut-marked and 27 percussion-marked faunal specimens (out of a total of 6,039 specimens), suggesting that raw material availability may have conditioned hominin lithic discard patterns at these locales. These assemblages increase our knowledge of the dietary behavior and ecology of Homo erectus, and provide support for variability in early Pleistocene

hominin carcass foraging patterns." "A million years ago fire was used, ash and charred bone, at Wonderwerk Cave in South Africa. Fire can be said to have a reasonably wide use and possibly being sacralized then, but we do know at some point it was attached to sacredness. At what point in humanoid history did these sacred rituals fully appear, and did shared feasting aid in this? What dreams were dreamed, what stories told around the fire? There seems to be fossil evidence of feasting on rhinos dating to around 2 million years ago. (likely was scavenged not killed in a hunt. The fossils and stone tools from the Philippines where dated to between 777,000 and 631,000 years ago, and research confirmed that the butchering of the rhino took place around 700,000 years ago." I would first like to point out that there seems to be some scant possible hinting of the earliest pseudo-superstition before 1 million years ago and possibly back to 2 million years ago. Yet likely this is not truly full superstitionism and defiantly not religion, but there are still elements there that are forming that will further religions' future evolution.

Around 1.5 Million years ago, in Kenya, Africa two sites at Koobi Fora show evidence of control of fire as well as other sites at a little later dates, such as Chesowanja and Olorgesailie, show potential evidence that fire was utilized by early humans although this is not evidence of cooked food.

1 Million Years Ago – Wonderwerk Cave (South Africa), found evidence of controlled use of several fires likely by Homo erectus our human ancestors, including the use of fire in cooking of plants and animals. Also found were stone tools all showing thoughtful intentionality. It is possible that fire could have played a part in early superstitionism, then supernaturalism and following through into religion as well as myths.

770,000 Years Ago – Homo erectus and Homo erectus pekinensis (Peking Man) left evidence which helps establishes they could control and use fire. We need to stop thinking that all advancement waited until modern humans came along. We likely learned a few things from the beings before us, just as it is not unthinkable that the beings before us likely learned a few things from the beings before them.

600,000 Years Ago – Fire can be said to have a reasonably wide use and possibly being sacralized to some extent then or sometime later, but we do know at some point fire was attached to sacredness. At what point in humanoid history did these sacred rituals fully appear? What dreams were dreamed, what stories told around the fire? It is likely fire was one of the earliest superstitionized things, later becoming a supernaturalized symbols, them lasting as a sacradized part of religious iconography.

400,000 Years Ago – Neanderthals were commonly using fire. The most probable ignition source was flint and iron pyrite (fool's gold).

300,000 Years Ago – Qesem Cave (Israel), found prehistoric hearth full of ash and charred bone. This may be a hint that early humans sat around fires before Homo sapiens evolved in Africa. The finds could shed light on a turning point in the development of culture. After human ancestors controlled fire 1.5 million to 300,000 years ago and beyond, flames not only let them cook food and fend off predators but also extended their day and added to the community by how a fire in the middle of the darkness mellows and also excites people. Thus, we may rightly ponder how

much did fireside tales aid to the socio-cultural-religious transformations or evolution. In the dark under flickering lights both above and below, was the scene a mix of wonder, fear, and mystery that superstition was expanded and religion further imagined? It would seem that superstition was expanded and religion further imagined because both heavenly lights and flickering fire have been sacralized. Which does seem to be somewhat supported by a researcher who spent 40 years studying African Bushmen who gathered evidence of the importance of gathering around a nighttime campfire might be a universally applicable time for bonding, social information, many shared emotions, in fireside tales if we can ascertain a correlation that our prehistoric ancestors likely lived in a similar way to how the Bushmen current do. Although we cannot directly peer into the past, or fully know the past from the indigenous Bushmen, these people do live in a way that our ancient ancestors lived for around 99% of our evolution. Therefore, we can somewhat draw some reasonable parallels such as how daytime conversations focused mainly on social relationships with only a small percentage of stories, whereas the evening conversations around campfires centered on storytelling, especially the adding of stories about the spirit world adding possible credence to the thinking that nighttime and its darkness full of fear and or wonder in the flickering lights of fireside allows for more mystical thinking and the tales such an environment can produce which could have aided in socio-cultural-religious transformations or evolution. The importance of water and fire can be a set of hidden factors to human evolution and socio-cultural-religious transformations and involved in many religion themes; lingering primitive animism still seen in current religions. Fire as sacred or magic can be seen in consuming fire, volcanos/lightning as gods power/vengeance, holy fire, fire as a means of transformation or magical purification or just a magical being itself as well as used in fire worship/worshiping the sun or punishment (hell: lake of fire which could be seen as mixing fire and water if only symbolically) used in ceremonies like bonfires, eternal flames, or sacred candles/incense/lights/lamps are in one form or another incorporated in many faiths such as judaism, christianity, islam, hinduism, buddhism, sikhism, bahaism, shintoism, taoism, etc. All this worship of fire/sun are hardly special certain primates worship thunderstorms, others fire or sunrises. We have forgotten how nature worship, animistic superstitionism, or superstitionism is presented in today's religion. The mega religions now think they are removed from animistic superstitionism, which they have not. Their rituals, beliefs, and prayers have a connection to animism nature worship but are more hidden or stylized, such as burning candles which is worshipping fire.

Around 500,000 – 233,000 years ago, Oldest Anthropomorphic art (Pre-animism) is Related to Female

The world's oldest sculpture Venus of Berekhat Ram; archaeology reveals the earliest sculptures discovered and enhanced by hominid hand.

Pre-animism: Anthropology; "A stage of religious development supposed to have preceded animism, in which material objects were believed to contain spiritual energy." ref

Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human traits, emotions, or intentions to non-human entities. It is considered to be an innate tendency of human psychology.

Personification is the related attribution of human form and characteristics to abstract concepts such as nations, emotions and natural forces like seasons and the weather. Both have ancient roots as storytelling and artistic devices, and most cultures have traditional fables with anthropomorphized animals as characters. People have also routinely attributed human emotions and behavioral traits to wild as well as domestic animals. From the beginnings of human behavioral modernity in the Upper Paleolithic, about 40,000 years ago, examples of zoomorphic (animal-shaped) works of art occur that may represent the earliest evidence we have of anthropomorphism.

One of the oldest known is an ivory sculpture, the Löwenmensch figurine, Germany, a human-shaped figurine with the head of a lioness or lion, determined to be about 32,000 years old. It is not possible to say what these prehistoric artworks represent. A more recent example is The Sorcerer, an enigmatic cave painting from the Trois-Frères Cave, Ariège, France: the figure's significance is unknown, but it is usually interpreted as some kind of great spirit or master of the animals. In either case, there is an element of anthropomorphism. This anthropomorphic art has been linked by archaeologist Steven Mithen with the emergence of more systematic hunting practices in the Upper Palaeolithic (Mithen 1998).

He proposes that these are the product of a change in the architecture of the human mind, an increasing fluidity between the natural history and social intelligences, where anthropomorphism allowed hunters to identify empathetically with hunted animals and better predict their movements. The Upper Paleolithic (or Upper Palaeolithic, Late Stone Age) is the third and last subdivision of the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age. Very broadly, it dates to between 50,000 and 10,000 years ago (the beginning Holocene), roughly coinciding with the appearance of behavioral modernity and before the advent of agriculture. Anatomically modern humans (i.e. Homo sapiens) are believed to have emerged around 200,000 years ago, although these lifestyles changed very little from that of archaic humans of the Middle Paleolithic, until about 50,000 years ago, when there was a marked increase in the diversity of artifacts. This period coincides with the expansion of modern humans throughout Eurasia, which contributed to the extinction of the Neanderthals.

The Upper Paleolithic has the earliest known evidence of organized settlements, in the form of campsites, some with storage pits. Artistic work blossomed, with cave painting, petroglyphs, carvings and engravings on bone or ivory. The first evidence of human fishing is also noted, from artifacts in places such as Blombos cave in South Africa. More complex social groupings emerged, supported by more varied and reliable food sources and specialized tool types. This probably contributed to increasing group identification or ethnicity.

By 50,000–40,000 BP, the first humans set foot in Australia. By 45,000 BP, humans lived at 61° north latitude in Europe. By 30,000 BP, Japan was reached, and by 27,000 BP humans were present in Siberia above the Arctic Circle. At the end of the Upper Paleolithic, a group of humans crossed the Bering land bridge and quickly expanded throughout North and South America. Both Homo erectus and Neanderthals used the same crude stone tools. Archaeologist Richard G. Klein, who has worked extensively on ancient stone tools, describes the stone tool kit of archaic hominids as impossible to categorize. It was as if the Neanderthals made stone tools, and were not much concerned about their final forms.

He argues that almost everywhere, whether Asia, Africa or Europe, before 50,000 years ago all the stone tools are much alike and unsophisticated. Firstly among the artifacts of Africa, archeologists found they could differentiate and classify those of less than 50,000 years into many different categories, such as projectile points, engraving tools, knife blades, and drilling and piercing tools. These new stone-tool types have been described as being distinctly differentiated from each other; each tool had a specific purpose.

The invaders commonly referred to as the Cro-Magnons, left many sophisticated stone tools, carved and engraved pieces on bone, ivory and antler, cave paintings and Venus figurines. The Neanderthals continued to use Mousterian stone tool technology and possibly Chatelperronian technology. These tools disappeared from the archeological record at around the same time the Neanderthals themselves disappeared from the fossil record, about 40,000 years ago.

Settlements were often located in narrow valley bottoms, possibly associated with the hunting of passing herds of animals. Some of them may have been occupied year round, though more commonly they appear to have been used seasonally; people moved between the sites to exploit different food sources at different times of the year. Hunting was important, and caribou/wild reindeer "may well be the species of single greatest importance in the entire anthropological literature on hunting."

Technological advances included significant developments in flint tool manufacturing, with industries based on fine blades rather than simpler and shorter flakes. Burins and racloirs were used to work bone, antler, and hides. Advanced darts and harpoons also appear in this period, along with the fish hook, the oil lamp, rope, and the eyed needle. The changes in human behavior have been attributed to the changes in climate during the period, which encompasses a number of global temperature drops.

This meant a worsening of the already bitter climate of the last glacial period (popularly but incorrectly called the last ice age). Such changes may have reduced the supply of usable timber and forced people to look at other materials. In addition, flint becomes brittle at low temperatures and may not have functioned as a tool. Some scholars have argued that the appearance of complex or abstract language made these behavior changes possible. The complexity of the new human capabilities hints that humans were less capable of planning or foresight before 40,000 years, while the emergence of cooperative and coherent communication marked a new era of cultural development.

In religion and mythology, anthropomorphism refers to the perception of a divine being or beings in human form or the recognition of human qualities in these beings. Ancient mythologies frequently represented the divine as deities with human forms and qualities. They resemble human beings not only in appearance and personality; they exhibited many human behaviors that were used to explain natural phenomena, creation, and historical events. The deities fell in love, married, had children, fought battles, wielded weapons, and rode horses and chariots. They feasted on special foods and sometimes required sacrifices of food, beverage, and sacred objects to be made by human beings. Some anthropomorphic deities represented specific human concepts, such as love, war, fertility, beauty, or the seasons. Anthropomorphic deities exhibited human qualities such

as beauty, wisdom, and power, and sometimes human weaknesses such as greed, hatred, jealousy, and uncontrollable anger.

Greek deities such as Zeus and Apollo often were depicted in human form exhibiting both commendable and despicable human traits. Anthropomorphism in this case is referred to as anthropotheism. From the perspective of adherents to religions in which humans were created in the form of the divine, the phenomenon may be considered theomorphism, or the giving of divine qualities to humans. Anthropomorphism has cropped up as a Christian heresy, particularly prominently with the Audians in third century Syria, but also in fourth-century Egypt and tenth century Italy. This often was based on a literal interpretation of Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them".

Figure Stones? "A shell etched by Homo erectus is by far the oldest engraving ever found, challenging what we know about the origin of art and complex human thought. A right-handed individual and used a shark's tooth. They had a remarkably steady hand and a strong arm. Half a million years ago, on the banks of a calm river in central Java, they scored a deep zigzag into a fossilised freshwater clam, by far the oldest engraving ever found. The date also means it was made two to three hundred thousand years before our own species evolved, by a more ancient hominin, Homo erectus."

If the artifact was intended to replicate a female figure, it would be the earliest example of representational art in the archaeological record. Rather than being made by modern humans, it would have been made by Homo erectus, hunter-gatherers and Acheulean tool users. There is some other evidence of an aesthetic sensibility during the period although compelling examples do not appear in the archaeological record until the emergence of behaviorally modern humans around 50,000 years ago.

"Venus of Berekhat Ram"

The Berekhat Ram sculpture (above right) has a groove around the neck and on the sides which have been shown to be deliberate modifications absent from other scoria found in the area. The archaeologist Alexander Marshak examined the pebble using an electron microscope. He concluded that it had been made, or enhanced, by hominid hand, the hominins who found and worked on their respective pieces would have been unaware of their future significance.

The Venus of Berekhat Ram is a pebble found at Berekhat Ram on the Golan Heights, Israel. The base object is an anthropomorphic red tufic pebble, 35 mm (1.4 in) long, which has had at least three grooves, possibly incised on it by a sharp-edged stone. One is a deep groove that encircles the narrower, more rounded end of the pebble, two shallower, curved grooves run down the sides. These grooves can be interpreted as marking the neck and arms of a figure. Because it was found between two layers of ash, it has been dated by tephrochronology to at least 230,000 years before the present but is at a range of 500,000 – 233,000 Years Ago.

Moreover, lf the artifact was intended to replicate a female figure, it would be the earliest example of representational art in the archaeological record. Rather than being made by modern humans, it would have been made by Neanderthals or perhaps by Homo erectus, hunter-gatherers and

Acheulean tool users. There is some other evidence of an aesthetic sensibility during the period although compelling examples do not appear in the archaeological record until the emergence of behaviorally modern humans around 50,000 years ago.

The venus of Berekhat Ram is a red stone figure with symbolic intent and possibly intended to represent an anthropomorphic female figure. The surface is a bright high red with a large hole lined with black volcanic glass is at the approximate position of a 'navel.' Venus figurines are often found in different elements or mediums from limestone, serpentine, ivory, clay, and bone ash and are dispersed from western Europe to Siberia. These figurines are often faceless with downturned heads, large breasts, buttocks (many-extreme fat), some possibly pregnant, several stuck into the ground, and found near cave walls or in hearths. So what are the possible explanations of venus figurines? They could be some kind of good luck charms (evidence of polish), symbols of fertility, cult objects, art, Paleolithic porn, or representations of women by women or men (some look like modern pregnant bodies and some very skinny) but overall there may be no one reason.

These figurines may have been created for several different reasons depending on time, place, and people but we just do not know. Though calling them all goddesses or venus is at least misleading if not outright uncalled for because of mythologizing motivated by current projections and this is true even if a few were seen as some kind of goddesses. However, the venus of Berekhat Ram even if just anthropomorphic art (i.e. ascribing human form or attributes to a thing not human) could be seen as possibly the earliest known archaeological manifestations of any kind of elements that later become more defined religious belief systems. This is reasonable because anthropomorphic character design in art is a symbolic use of design to portray personality and thus, natural objects resembling the human body (or parts of it) which have received minor amounts of intentional modification in order to bring out the similarity further for a desired purpose.

One could possibly even surmise that for some, there may have been a character that can play a possible part in telling stories. Thus, anthropomorphic art, such as venus figurines, may connect or be a larger growing fantasy of symbolism, superstitions, and supernaturalism thus to socio-cultural-religious transformations or evolution. Although one cannot at present rule out a purely fortuitous association with the venus of Berekhat Ram and the piece can hardly be described as artistic, the possibility remains that it can be placed in the figures category as unambiguous indicators of early symbolism, let alone ritual, and we should not write it off as casual 'lithic art'. Instead, the appearance of precocious lithic technologies such as end-scrapers and stone chisels at Berekhat Ram, symbolism (and by extension perhaps ritual) drifted in and out of use over evolutionary time.

Stone Age Art: 500,000 – 233,000 Years Old

500,000 – 233,000 Years Ago – The Venus of Berekhat Ram (Israel) is a red stone figure with symbolic intent and possibly intended to represent an anthropomorphic female figure. The surface is a bright high red with a large hole lined with black volcanic glass is at the approximate position of a 'navel.' Venus figurines are often found in different elements or mediums from limestone,

serpentine, ivory, clay, and bone ash and are dispersed from western Europe to Siberia. These figurines are often faceless with downturned heads, large breasts, buttocks (many-extreme fat), some possibly pregnant, several stuck into the ground, and found near cave walls or in hearths. So what are the possible explanations of venus figurines? They could be some kind of good luck charms (evidence of polish), symbols of fertility, cult objects, art, Paleolithic porn, or representations of women by women or men (some look like modern pregnant bodies and some very skinny) but overall there may be no one reason. These figurines may have been created for several different reasons depending on time, place, and people but we just do not know. Though calling them all goddesses or venus is at least misleading if not outright uncalled for because of mythologizing motivated by current projections and this is true even if a few were seen as some kind of goddesses. However, the venus of Berekhat Ram even if just anthropomorphic art (i.e. ascribing human form or attributes to a thing not human) could be seen as possibly the earliest known archaeological manifestations of any kind of elements that later become more defined religious belief systems. This is reasonable because anthropomorphic character design in art is a symbolic use of design to portray personality and thus, natural objects resembling the human body (or parts of it) which have received minor amounts of intentional modification in order to bring out the similarity further for a desired purpose. One could possibly even surmise that for some, there may have been a character that can play a possible part in telling stories. Thus anthropomorphic art such as Venus figurines may connect or be a larger growing fantasy of symbolism, superstitions, and supernaturalism thus to socio-cultural-religious transformations or evolution. Although one cannot at present rule out a purely fortuitous association with the venus of Berekhat Ram and the piece can hardly be described as artistic, the possibility remains that it can be placed in the figures category as unambiguous indicators of early symbolism, let alone ritual, and we should not write it off as casual ‘lithic art’. Instead, the appearance of precocious lithic technologies such as end-scrapers and stone chisels at Berekhat Ram, symbolism (and by extension perhaps ritual) drifted in and out of use over evolutionary time.

400,000 Years Old Sociocultural Evolution

400,000 Years Ago – Qesem Cave (Israel), found evidence seem to indicate around this time elephants once the main, as well as large and somewhat easy sore of food, disappeared, prompting a change in hunting to that of deer, a smaller and harder to obtain sores of food. At the same time, other evidence seems to indicate they regularly started cooking food, then smashing the bones to extract the marrow, even more, resourceful they used the bone fragments to create tools.

Amazingly also found was Hominidae teeth which seems to expose a kind of missing link more advanced than Homo erectus and precursors of Homo sapiens and the Neanderthals. Moreover, the teeth found seem to provide evidence for the existence of a type of link to Homo sapiens thus modern humans, 200,000 years earlier than those currently found in Africa, and may coincide or be yet another unknown like the genetics that showed that several men in Africa have unique, divergent Y-chromosomes that trace back to an ancient man who lived between 581,000 to 237,000 years ago as addressed before.

But as amazing as that is do not forget that we actually all evolved from fish and now modern genetics has also confirmed an ancient relationship between fish fins and human hands. And even

more amazing biologists have confirmed the evolution of the central nervous system demonstrating that nerve cell centralization begin in multicellular animals tracing back to the diffuse nerve net of simple and original lower animals like the sea anemone. The sea anemone Nematostella vectensis (simple sack-like body with no skeleton and just one body orifice) like corals and jellyfish is a member of the Cnidaria family, which is over 700 million years old.

Human Origins at 350,000 years ago and the Rise of Ritual as well as Religion

Fossils from Morocco suggest the Homo sapiens lineage became distinct as early as 350,000 years ago, adding as much as 150,000 years to our species' history, as before it was assumed our Human line emerged around 200,000 years ago.

"ON A TREE-SPECKLED savanna in what's now Morocco, a group of early humans once huddled near a fire, their stone tools scattered around their campsite. Now, examinations of fire-baked tools from the site suggest that these ancient people lived more than 300,000 years ago, making them twice as old as previously thought."

Pre-Animism Emergence is No Accident at Least by 300,000-year Ago Was Aided by Evolution

Pre-Animism: "animistic superstitionism", I surmise, leads to the animistic somethingism, or animistic supernatralism is presented in today's religions and is a representation of general Animism that is at least 100,000 years old.

The Blue on the outside references the size difference to modern human brains and the inside to illustrate regions with surface size increase associated with this gradual shape changes.

300,000-year-old Moroccan, North African skulls look shockingly that of Modern Humans and these skulls hold a combination of advanced and archaic features suggesting that these skulls may represent the very root of our Modern Human species. This is further supported in how all Homo sapiens ever found even far beyond Africa trace their ancestral linkages to the Moroccan, North African skulls or at least point as it where in that direction. And seemingly Homo sapiens could have been living across Africa and sem9ingly engaging in extensive movement, which could have involved exchange both in ideas, technology as well as even genetics.

300,000-year-old wolf tooth pendant from Repolust Cave, Austria.

There was a primitive Homo sapiens skull found at Jebel Irhoud in Morocco dated to around 300,000 years ago. With remarkable similarities between the Moroccan skull and one found in China dated to around 260,000 years ago.

The Emergence of Pre-Religion 300,000 years ago, with Pre-Animism?

Around a million years ago, I surmise that Pre-Animism, "animistic superstitionism", began, Around 400,000 Years ago shows Sociocultural Evolution, and then led to the animistic somethingism or animistic supernaturalism, which is at least 300,000 years old and about 100,00 years ago, it evolves to a representation of general Animism, which is present in today's religions. There is also Homo Naledi and an Intentional Cemetery "Pre-Animism" dating to around 250,000 years ago. And, Neanderthals "Primal Religion (Pre-Animism/Animism?)" Mystery Cave Rings

175,000 Years Ago. Neanderthals were the first humans to intentionally bury the dead, around 130,000 years ago at sites such as Krapina in Croatia.

“Religion is an Evolved Product”

In a general way, it all starts with Animism (a theoretical belief in supernatural powers/spirits) and this is physically expressed in or with Totemism (a theoretical belief in a mythical relationship with powers/spirits through a totem item), which then enlists a full-time specific person to perform this worship and believed interaction as Shamanism (a theoretical belief in access and influence with spirits through rituals). In addition, there is the further employment of myths and gods added to all the above, which is Paganism and is often a lot more nature-based than most current top world religions, thus hinting to their close link to more ancient religious thinking from which it stems.

My hypothesis is expressed with an explanation of the building of a theoretical house (modern religions development). It seems ancient peoples had to survived amazing threats in a “dangerous universe by superstition perceived as good and evil”, and human “immorality or imperfection of the soul”, which was thought to affect the still living and led to ancestor worship. Presumably, this ancestor worship led to the belief in supernatural beings, which some of these were turned into the belief in gods. This feeble myth called gods were just a human conceived idea that was “made from nothing into something over and over, changing again and again, taking on more as they evolve, and all the while, they are thought to be special.” However, it is just supernatural animistic spirit-belief perceived as sacred.

Historically, around 5,000 years ago, in large city-state societies such as Egypt or Iraq culminated to make religion into something kind of new, a sociocultural-governmental-religious monarchy, where all or at least many of the people of such large city-state societies seem familiar with and committed to the existence of “religion” as the integrated life identity package of control dynamics with a fixed closed magical doctrine. However, this juggernaut integrated religion identity package of Dogmatic-Propaganda certainly did not exist or if developed to an extent, it was highly limited in most smaller prehistoric societies as they seem to lack most of the strong control dynamics with a fixed closed magical doctrine. These magical beliefs could be at times be added or removed and many people just want to see developed religious dynamics everywhere, even if it is not. Instead, all that is found is largely fragments until the domestication of religion.

Religions, as we think of them today, are a new fad, even if they go back to around 6,000 years in the timeline of human existence. This amounts to almost nothing when seen in the long slow evolution of religion that started at least around 70,000 years ago with one of the oldest ritual worship. This message of how religion and gods are intertwined with humans is clearly a man-made idea that was developed slowly as it was invented, reinvented, and implemented piece by piece, which discredits them all. This seems to be a simple point, which some are just not grasping how devastating this is to any claims of truth when we can see the lie clearly in the archeological sites.

Pre-Animism: Portable Rock Art at least 300,000-year-old

Lower Paleolithic Figure (ANCESTOR?) Stones?

Face made around 450,000 to 300,000 years before present, The Netherlands.

Pre-Animism: Portable Rock Art at least 300,000-year-old some possibly up to 500,000 years ago. This Pre-Animism, to me, involves "animistic superstitionism", I surmise, which leads to the animistic somethingism or animistic supernaturalism that is presented in today's religions and is a representation of general Animism that is at least 100,000 years old.

Five types of ancient art sculpture

Flint 'portrait' from the Ohle gravel pit which is likely 423,000 -524,000 years old Similar profile heads from the Ohle pit. Center is the primary piece which is sometimes called 'Sorrowful Man.' Height, 13.2cm; Width, 9.6cm.

One of the most productive sites for Early Paleolithic figurines is the Ohle gravel pit, Groß Pampau, near Hamburg, Germany, from Elster glacial moraine basal gravels and the artifacts from these gravels can be dated to 478,000 -524,000 years ago, 423,000 -478,000, or generally about 500,000 to 400,000 years ago. There appears to be some reworking of artifacts suggests a time around 362,000 -423,000 years ago with associated tools from the Middle Acheulian style and early Later Acheulian quality, suggesting that some are around 500,000 years ago or older. The preponderance of Abbevillian and early Later Acheulian type tools at Pampau and their setting in the Elster moraine suggest that the Pampau palaeo-art is basically Later Acheulian period and thus the Ohle Elster gravels palaeo-art might be considered one of the oldest examples of palaeo-art in the world. It at least puts the Ohle site in a time frame comparable to the accepted Later Acheulian figurines from Tan-Tan, Morocco, 300,000 -500,000 years ago or older and Berekhat Ram, from Israel, dates to around 233,000-470,000.

The Venus of Berekhat Ram is a seeming female figure, anthropomorphic red tufic pebble, 35 mm (1.4 in) long found at Berekhat Ram on the Golan Heights, Israel between two layers of ash, at least 230,000 years ago and likely 300,000 years ago or older maybe up to 500,000 years ago. Rather than being made by modern humans, it would have been made by Neanderthals or perhaps by Homo erectus, hunter-gatherers and Acheulean tool users. ref

Tan-Tan sculpture from Morocco, North Africa part of the Acheulian stone tool culture, dating to 500,000-300,000 years old, resembling a human figure and was found near stone tools seeming to express its cultural importance.

Homo Naledi and an Intentional Cemetery "Pre-Animism" dating to around 250,000 years ago?

To me, it seems likely Homo Naledi did have an intentional cemetery as seen at Dinaledi Chamber, in South African, thus "Pre-Animism" dating to around 250,000 years ago. Mysterious cache of bones from several Homo naledi, where recovered from a deep chamber in a South African cave, seeming to express a cemetery far from the cave entrance, accessible only through a narrow, difficult passage impossible place to live, and not by accident this purposefully cave chamber was most likely kind of graveyard.

A mysterious cache of bones from several people, recovered from a deep chamber in a South African cave, sees to express a Homo naledi intentional cemetery far from the cave entrance, accessible only through a narrow, difficult passage that is completely shrouded in darkness. Scientists believe the chamber has long been difficult to access, requiring a journey of vertical climbing, crawling, and tight squeezing through spaces only 20 centimeters across. It would be an impossible place to live, and a highly unlikely location for many individuals to have ended up by accident. Those details are quite challenging to the long-held beliefs of many about how a group of bipedal apes through evolution prosses developed into the abstract-thinking creatures that we call "human", yet still there is this shocking hypothesis: despite its smaller brain, Homo naledi purposefully interred its dead, thus it is believed that presumably, the cave chamber was a graveyard, they concluded.

Deliberate placement of bodies hypotheses

There are some indications the individuals may have been deliberately placed in the cave near the time of their death, and experts state more evidence is needed to support this hypothesis. Anthropologist John D. Hawks, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison who was a member of the team, stated that the scientific facts are that all the bones recovered are hominid, except for those of one owl; there are no signs of predation, and there is no predator that accumulates only hominids this way; the bones did not accumulate there all at once. There is no evidence of rocks or sediment having dropped into the cave from any opening in the surface, and no evidence of water flowing into the cave carrying the bones into the cave. Hawks concluded that the best hypothesis is that the bodies were deliberately placed in the cave after death, by other members of the species. Dirks et al. say that "Mono-specific assemblages have been described from Tertiary and Mesozoic vertebrate fossil sites (…), linked to catastrophic events (…) Among deposits of non–Homo sapiens hominins, where evidence of catastrophic events is lacking, mono-specific assemblages have been associated typically with deliberate cultural deposition or burial". They stated that there is no evidence a catastrophe placed the bodies in the cave and that the bodies were deliberately placed in the cave. William Jungers, an anatomical scientist at Stony Brook University, does not dispute that the Homo naledi bones belong in the genus Homo and were likely deposited deliberately, but he cautions against trying to argue for "complex social organization and symbolic behaviors." He suggests that "Dumping conspecifics down a hole may be better than letting them decay around you." He speculates that in the past there may have been another, easier, way to access the chamber where the bones were found. Dirks et al., mentions that there is insufficient evidence to suggest the existence of an alternate and easier access route from the surface to the Denaledi Chamber. Carol Ward, professor of pathology and anatomical sciences at the University of Missouri, is also skeptical of the intentional burial explanation and asked, "If it's really that hard to get to the cave, how do you get to that long dark cave carrying your dead grandmother?" Berger thinks that deliberate disposal of bodies within the intricate cave system would have required the species members to find their way through the total darkness and back again, and he speculates that this would have required light in the form of torches or fires lit at intervals. Aurore Val argues the team has yet to make a convincing case on their deliberate placement hypothesis. Several aspects of the fossilization process (taphonomy) indicate that the remains did not enter the chamber in a single instantaneous event.

Ritual hypotheses

Berger et al. suggest that "these individuals were capable of ritual behavior". They speculate the placing of dead bodies in the cave was a ritualistic behavior, a sign of symbolic thought. "Ritual" here means an intentional and repeated practice (disposing of dead bodies in the cave), and not implying any type of religious ritual. The date of emergence of ritualistic behavior in human prehistory is controversial, and all evidence for symbolic bbehaviorbefore the beginning of the Upper Palaeolithic about 50,000 years ago is debated. Rick Potts noted: There is no evidence of material culture, like tools, or any evidence any kind of symbolic ritual that we almost always associated with burial. …These bodies seem to have simply been dropped down a hole and disposed of." Research article "Dirks et al." (2015) states: Every previously known case of cultural deposition has been attributed to species of the genus Homo with cranial capacities (brain size) near the modern human range, and unlike the Dinaledi assemblage, each of these hominin associated occurrences also contains at least some medium- to large-sized, non-hominin fauna. William Jungers has raised similar concerns regarding the hypothesis. Science writer Michael Shermer suggests considering homicide, war, and even sacrifice as the cause of death, but John D. Hawks, one of the scientists who categorised and analysed the fossils, notes that there is no evidence for a violent death among the bodies.

What is Homo naledi

Homo naledi is an extinct species of hominin, fossil skeletons of at least fifteen individuals, amounting to more than 1550 specimens, were found in the Gauteng province of South Africa, in the Rising Star Cave system, part of the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site about 50 km (31 mi) northwest of Johannesburg. The word "naledi" means "star" in the Sotho-Tswana languages. It, and the corresponding name DinalediChamber ("chamber of stars"), were chosen to reference the Rising Star cave system where the fossils were found include skulls, jaws, ribs, teeth, bones of an almost complete foot, of a hand, and of an inner ear. In 2017, however, the fossils were dated to between 335,000 and 236,000 years ago, long after much larger-brained and more modern-looking hominins had appeared. The research team, therefore, thinks that Homo naledi is not a direct ancestor of modern humans, although it is probably an offshoot within the genus Homo. In May 2018, anthropologists provided evidence that the brain of Homo naledi was small, but nonetheless complex, sharing structural similarities with the modern human brain.

Homo Naledi Morphology

The physical characteristics of Homo naledi are described as having traits similar to the genus Australopithecus, mixed with traits more characteristic of the genus Homo, and traits not known in other hominin species. The skeletal anatomy displays plesiomorphic ("ancestral") features found in the australopithecines and more apomorphic ("derived," or traits arising separately from the ancestral state) features known from later hominins. Adult males are estimated to have stood around 150 cm (5 ft) tall and weighed around 45 kg (100 lb), while females would likely have been a little shorter and weighed a little less. An analysis of Homo naledi's skeleton suggests it stood upright and was bipedal. Its hip mechanics, the flared shape of the pelvis are similar to australopithecines, but its legs, feet, and ankles are more similar to the genus Homo. The hands of

Homo naledi appear to have been better suited for object manipulation than those of australopithecines. Some of the bones resemble modern human bones, but other bones are more primitive than Australopithecus, an early ancestor of humans. The thumb, wrist, and palm bones are modern-like while the fingers are curved, more australopithecine, and useful for climbing. The shoulders are configured largely like those of australopithecines. The vertebrae are most similar to Pleistocene members of the genus Homo, whereas the ribcage is wide distally as is A. afarensis. The arm has an Australopithecus-similar shoulder and fingers and a Homo-similar wrist and palm. The structure of the upper body seems to have been more primitive than that of other members of the genus Homo, even apelike. In evolutionary biology, such a mixture of features is known as an anatomical mosaic. The overall anatomical structure of the species has prompted the investigating scientists to classify the species within the genus Homo, rather than within the genus Australopithecus. The Homo naledi skeletons indicate that the origins of the genus Homo were complex and may be polyphyletic (hybrid), and that the species may have evolved separately in different parts of Africa.

Neanderthals "Primal Religion (Pre-Animism/Animism?)" Mystery Cave Rings 175,000 Years Ago

Evidence left involves the rubble of two ancient Neanderthal-made buildings meticulously crafted from stalagmites. The site is located 1,000 feet into a dark, twisting cave 30 miles outside what is now Toulouse in southwestern France. There were more than 400 stalagmites of similar size meticulously stacked to form the walls of two mysterious circular structures. Stalagmites are the mineral spears that rise up from the ground; stalactites are the hanging ones. Bruniquel Cave near Bruniquel, in an area which has many paleolithic sites, east of Montauban in southwestern France. clearly had primitive paintings near the cavern's mouth, only now have scientists like Jaubert been able to delve and explore into the cave's depths. The structures discovered today were found in the dark reaches 1,102 feet from the cave's entrance. One of the ring structures is about 7 feet in diameter. The other is a bit more egg-shaped and varies between 22 and 15 feet in diameter. The rings have been blackened, cracked, and reddened—evidence that they were heated by fire. The chemical fingerprints of fire during an analysis of the rings, and also uncovered what appears to be heated bones found inside. The discovery shows that early Neanderthals were capable of building more elaborate structures than previously realized and that they had a more complex social organization than previously thought. The modern human Aurignacian culture, over 100,000 years later, is not known to have produced constructions in caves.

Did Neanderthals teach us "Primal Religion (Pre-Animism/Animism?)" 120,000 Years Ago?

Evidence suggests that the Neanderthals were the first humans to intentionally bury the dead, doing so in shallow graves along with stone tools and animal bones. 130,000 years ago – Earliest undisputed evidence for intentional burial. Neanderthals bury their dead at sites such as Krapina in Croatia.

Homo sapiens – is known to have reached the Levant between 120,000 and 90,000 years ago, but that exit from Africa evidently went extinct.

A population that diverged early from other modern humans in Africa contributed genetically to the ancestors of Neanderthals from the Altai Mountains roughly 100,000 years ago. By contrast, we do not detect such a genetic contribution in the Denisovan or the two European Neanderthals. In addition to later interbreeding events, the ancestors of Neanderthals from the Altai Mountains and early modern humans met and interbred, possibly in the Near East, many thousands of years earlier than previously thought.

In 2005, a set of 7 teeth from Tabun Cave in Israel were studied and found to most likely belong to a Neandertal that may have lived around 90,000 years ago and another Neandertal (C1) from Tabun Cave was estimated to be in northern Israel. The limb bones are characteristic of Neanderthals, whereas the lower jaw has a combination of Neanderthal and earlier features. These fossils date from more than 150,000 years ago.

A fossilized human jawbone in a collapsed cave in Israel that they said is between 177,000 and 194,000 years old.

The Tabun Cave contains a Neanderthal-type female, dated to about 120,000 years ago. It is one of the most ancient human skeletal remains found in Israel.

Objects at Tabun suggests that ancestral humans used fire at the site on a regular basis since about 350,000 years ago.

The remains of seven adults and three children were found, some of which (Skhul;1,4, and 5) are claimed to have been burials.

Assemblages of perforated Nassarius shells (a marine genus) significantly different from local fauna have also been recovered from the area, suggesting that these people may have collected and employed the shells as bead as they are unlikely to have been used as food.

Skhul Layer B has been dated to an average of 81,000-101,000 years ago with the electron spin resonance method, and to an average of 119,000 years ago with the thermoluminescence method.

Skhul 5 had the mandible of a wild boar on its chest. The skull displays prominent supraorbital ridges and jutting jaw, but the rounded braincase of modern humans. When found, it was assumed to be an advanced Neanderthal, but is today generally assumed to be a modern human, if a very robust one.

It is possible that Neandertals and early moderns did make contact in the region and it may be possible that the Skhul and Qafzeh hominids are partially of Neandertal descent. Non-African modern humans contain 1-4% Neandertal genetic material, with hybridization possibly having taken place in the Middle East.

It has been suggested, however, that the Skhul/Qafzeh hominids represent an extinct lineage. If this is the case, modern humans would have re-exited Africa around 70,000 years ago, crossing the narrow Bab-el-Mandeb strait between Eritrea and the Arabian Peninsula.

Modern humans were present in Arabia and South Asia earlier than currently believed, and probably coincident with the presence of Homo sapiens in the Levant between ca 130 and 70,000 years ago.

This is the same route proposed to have been taken by the people who made the modern tools at Jebel Faya.

This Neandertal girl's toe bone had ancient DNA her ancestors picked up by mating with modern humans more than 100,000 years ago.

If the Skhul burials took place within a relatively short time span, then the best age estimate lies between 100 and 135 ka. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that the material associated with the Skhul IX burial is older than those of Skhul II and Skhul V. These and other recent age estimates suggest that the three burial sites, Skhul, Qafzeh and Tabun are broadly contemporaneous, falling within the time range of 100 to 130 ka. The presence of early representatives of both early modern humans and Neanderthals in the Levant during Marine Isotope Stage 5 inevitably complicates attempts at segregating these populations by date or archaeological association. Nevertheless, it does appear that the oldest known symbolic burials are those of early modern humans at Skhul and Qafzeh. This supports the view that, despite the associated Middle Palaeolithic technology, elements of modern human behaviour were represented at Skhul and Qafzeh prior to 100 ka.

As some of the first bands of modern humans moved out of Africa, they met and mated with Neandertals about 100,000 years ago—perhaps in the fertile Nile Valley, along the coastal hills of the Middle East, or in the once-verdant Arabian Peninsula. These early modern humans' own lineages died out, and they are not among the ancestors of living people. But a small bit of their DNA survived in the toe bone of a Neandertal woman who lived more than 50,000 years ago in Denisova Cave in the Altai Mountains of Siberia, Russia.

100,000 years ago – The oldest known ritual burial of modern humans at Qafzeh in Israel: a double burial of what is thought to be a mother and child. The bones have been stained with red ochre. By 100,000 years ago anatomically modern humans migrated to the middle east from Africa. However the fossil record of these humans ends after 100kya, leading scholars to believe that population either died out or returned to Africa. 100,000 to 50,000 years ago – Increased use of red ochre at several Middle Stone Age sites in Africa. Red Ochre is thought to have played an important role in ritual. The human skeletons were associated with red ochre which was found only alongside the bones, suggesting that the burials were symbolic in nature.

Within Israel's Qafzeh Cave, researchers found evidence of a sophisticated culture and remains of modern humans that are up to 100,000 years old. About 100,000 years ago, tall, long-limbed humans lived in the caves of Qafzeh, east of Nazareth, and Skhul, on Israel's Mount Carmel. The Skhul-Qafzeh people gathered shells from a shoreline more than 20 miles away, decorated them and strung them as jewelry. They buried their dead, most likely with grave goods, and cared for their living: A child born with hydrocephalus, sometimes called water on the brain, lived with profound disability until the age of 3 or so, a feat only possible with patient, loving care. The Qafzeh humans were around 92,000 years old, and the Skhul people were even older, averaging

about 115,000 years. Around 75,000 years ago, close to the time the Homo sapiens of Skhul and Qafzeh disappear from the fossil record, the climate in the Levant shifted in Neanderthals' favor. Rapid glaciation left the region both cooler and drier. Steppe-deserts advanced, and forests retreated. Neanderthal bodies were adapted for colder conditions. Their stocky, barrel-chested build lost less heat and offered plenty of insulating muscle, and their systems were streamlined to extract calories from food and turn them into body heat. The Skhul-Qafzeh people's slender physiques were better at getting rid of heat than making it. Or, as Shea says, "Neanderthals liked cold and dry. Our ancestors liked warm and wet. It got cold, and humans retreated."

The Origin of Language: Starts in Symbolism Around 100,000 years ago, to Early Proto-Writing 44,000-5,000 years ago with Unrealized Connections

Here we see the tracings of the engraved ochres from the Blombos cave site's in South Africa, from its Middle Stone Age layers and their stratigraphic locations where they were found in the dirt and the years they relate too. M1 dates to around 73,000 years ago, M2 around 85,000 to 77,000 years ago, and M3 dates to around 100,000 to 99,000 years ago. Middle Stone Age generally started around 280,000 years ago and ended around 25,000 years ago or so. Therefore, amazing as it is, here we have proof that "Symbolic Meaning," seems to be clear at the beginning of Animism, as seen in Africa 100,000 years ago.

In a landmark study, it was demonstrated, for the first time, that there are seeming tradition in the production of geometric engraved representations, includes the production of a number of different patterns and this set of evolving traditions have roots that go back in time to at least 100,000 years ago (around a time I say Animism begins in Africa). The fact that they were created, that most of them are deliberate and were made with representational intent, strongly suggests they functioned as artifacts within a society by symbols with meaning.

Now for my thoughts on the "Roots of Languages" start around 100,000 years ago with the emergence of meaningful symbolism in Africa with Animism. Which then becomes more developed after 50,000 years ago with Totemism.

Which then keeps solidifying until around 25,000 years ago in France with that becoming universal symbols and Proto-Language with Shamanism then this was further developed in Asia moving to the Balkans then turkey with the emergence of Paganism, with symbolic Goddesses in art after 12,000 years ago and the birth of the Creation of Male God around 7,000 years ago and proto-kings, such as seen in the royal nobility skeleton discovered in Grave No. 43 in the Varna culture (around 6,400-6,100 years ago) Chalcolithic Necropolis together with the numerous gold artifacts dating to the middle of the 5th Millenium BCE – and is the old processed gold in the world.

Which took it to a few different areas but defiantly is seen in a new way as it moved north to the step lands of Eastern Europe and the Proto-Indo-European language as well as south into Jordan and Israel by 6,500 to 6,000 years ago at which time it then moves to Egypt becoming more advanced with the emergence of an emerging nation of Egypt around 5,000 years ago as well as Mesopotamia with Progressed organized religion.

Animism: an approximately 100,000-year-old belief system?

Animism (from Latin anima, “breath, spirit, life”) is the religious belief that objects, places, and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. Potentially, animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork and perhaps even words—as animated and alive. Animism is the oldest known type of belief system in the world that even predates paganism. It is still practiced in a variety of forms in many traditional societies. Animism is used in the anthropology of religion as a term for the belief system of many indigenous tribal peoples, especially in contrast to the relatively more recent development of organized religions. Although each culture has its own different mythologies and rituals, “animism” is said to describe the most common, foundational thread of indigenous peoples’ “spiritual” or “supernatural” perspectives. The animistic perspective is so widely held and inherent to most animistic indigenous peoples that they often do not even have a word in their languages that corresponds to “animism” (or even “religion”); the term is an anthropological construct.

Stone Snake of South Africa: “first human worship” 70,000 years ago

75,000 – 70,000 Years Ago – (South Africa), found engraved pieces of sacralized rock art composed of red ochre and decorated with abstract pattern at Klein Kliphuis, Wonderwerk Cave, Klasies River Cave like those mentioned earlier at Blombos Cave. 70,000 Years Ago – Tsodilo Hills (Southern Africa), found the “first human worship” of a megalithic serpent/ python /snake-shaped rock with ritual carvings on it in python cave or rhino cave. The large python looking stone item monument comes out of a cave and links to mythology of modern local people like a mecca of sorts calling it mountain of the gods. The worship has a greater conformation of worship such as offerings such as 100 multicolored spear points some burned or smashed and 22 tips made from red stone, which leads to some kind of proto early religion, animistic mysticism or totemistic supernaturalism. Hunter-gatherer monuments occur on every inhabited continent, such communities commonly recognize natural features seeing mystical essence, physically altering them to ritual emphasis understood as veneration of natural things or places. African ethnography exposes the distinction through the contrast between ‘places of power’ and ‘shrines of the land’. Monuments of either ‘places of power’ or ‘shrines of the land’ connect not only to the landscapes but may indeed be a fundamental characteristic or tendency to anthropomorphism. I would like to highlight the possible continuing theme of shake sacralization that is seen at the first human worship of a megalithic stone snake located in South Africa; which is similar to the seeming snake reverence at Gobekli Tepe, the first human made temple located in southeast Turkey, with an extra significance of sacralized snakes, even some seeming to suggesting a believed magical connection to women and birth. This python cave with the megalithic snake-shaped rock in the Tsodilo Hills is a long list thing of worship but the theme is quite alive and well seen in how the area is still venerated as the “Mountains of the Gods” and python is one of the most important animals by the San people (or Bushmen), various indigenous hunter-gatherer people basically from Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and South Africa. What is similarly intriguing is how the San people’s myth of humanities conception involved a python (seeing to show a birth connection theme with snakes) and streams around the hills are sacralized as having been created by the python as it circled the hills endlessly searching for water. DNA tests show that the ancestors of today’s San hunter-gatherers seem to have separated from other human populations in Africa about 200,000 years ago, to then become genetically isolated around 100,000 years ago, when

humans where still confined to the African continent. It is speculated the split involved two separate populations where the San hunter-gatherers evolved in isolation until they came started to come back together about 50, 000 to 40,000 years ago, reforming a single pan-African human population. Also of note found artifacts dating to around 44,000 years ago, demonstrating some of the earliest evidence for modern human behaviors, at a time close to the remerging of all humans demonstrates ancient hunter-gatherer's tools of southern Africa are almost identical to ones used by modern San hunter-gatherers.

World's Oldest Ritual Discovered — Worshipped The Python 70,000 Years Ago

Per.sciencedaily.com, "A startling archaeological discovery this summer changes our understanding of human history. While, up until now, scholars have largely held that man's first rituals were carried out over 40, 000 years ago in Europe, it now appears that they were wrong about both the time and place. Associate Professor Sheila Coulson, from the University of Oslo, can now show that modern humans, Homo sapiens, have performed advanced rituals in Africa for 70,000 years. She has, in other words, discovered mankind's oldest known ritual. The archaeologist made the surprising discovery while she was studying the origin of the Sanpeople. A group of the San live in the sparsely inhabited area of north-western Botswana known as Ngamiland. Coulson made the discovery while searching for artifacts from the Middle Stone Age in the only hills present for hundreds of kilometers in any direction. This group of small peaks within the Kalahari Desert is known as the Tsodilo Hills and is famous for having the largest concentration of rock paintings in the world. The Tsodilo Hills are still a sacred place for the San, who call them the "Mountains of the Gods" and the "Rock that Whispers". The python is one of the San's most important animals. According to their creation myth, mankind descended from the python and the ancient, arid streambeds around the hills are said to have been created by the python as it circled the hills in its ceaseless search for water. Sheila Coulson's find shows that people from the area had a specific ritual location associated with the python. The ritual was held in a little cave on the northern side of the Tsodilo Hills. The cave itself is so secluded and access to it is so difficult that it was not even discovered by archaeologists until the 1990s. When Coulson entered the cave this summer with her three master's students, it struck them that the mysterious rock resembled the head of a huge python. On the six meter long by two meter tall rock, they found three-to-four hundred indentations that could only have been man-made. "You could see the mouth and eyes of the snake. It looked like a real python. The play of sunlight over the indentations gave them the appearance of snake skin. At night, the firelight gave one the feeling that the snake was actually moving". They found no evidence that work had recently been done on the rock. In fact, much of the rock's surface was extensively eroded. When they saw the many indentations in the rock, the archaeologists wondered about more than when the work had been done. They also began thinking about what the cave had been used for and how long people had been going there. With these questions in mind, they decided to dig a test pit directly in front of the python stone. At the bottom of the pit, they found many stones that had been used to make the indentations. Together with these tools, some of which were more than 70,000 years old, they found a piece of the wall that had fallen off during the work. In the course of their excavation, they found more than 13,000 artifacts. All of the objects were spearheads and articles that could be connected with ritual use, as well as tools used in carving the stone. They found nothing else. As if that were not enough, the stones

that the spearheads were made from are not from the Tsodilo region but must have been brought from hundreds of kilometers away. The spearheads are better crafted and more colourful than other spearheads from the same time and area. Surprisingly enough, it was only the red spearheads that had been burned. “Stone age people took these colourful spearheads, brought them to the cave, and finished carving them there. Only the red spearheads were burned. It was a ritual destruction of artifacts. There was no sign of normal habitation. No ordinary tools were found at the site. Our find means that humans were more organised and had the capacity for abstract thinking at a much earlier point in history than we have previously assumed. All of the indications suggest that Tsodilo has been known to mankind for almost 100,000 years as a very special place in the pre-historic landscape.” says Sheila Coulson. Sheila Coulson also noticed a secret chamber behind the python stone. Some areas of the entrance to this small chamber were worn smooth, indicating that many people had passed through it over the years. “The shaman, who is still a very important person in San culture, could have kept himself hidden in that secret chamber. He would have had a good view of the inside of the cave while remaining hidden himself. When he spoke from his hiding place, it could have seemed as if the voice came from the snake itself. The shaman would have been able to control everything. It was perfect.” The shaman could also have “disappeared” from the chamber by crawling out onto the hillside through a small shaft. While large cave and wall paintings are numerous throughout the Tsodilo Hills, there are only two small paintings in this cave: an elephant and a giraffe. These images were rendered, surprisingly, exactly where water runs down the wall. Sheila Coulson thinks that an explanation for this might come from San mythology. In one San story, the python falls into a body of water and cannot get out by itself. The python is pulled from the water by a giraffe. The elephant, with its long trunk, is often used as a metaphor for the python. “In the cave, we find only the San people’s three most important animals: the python, the elephant, and the giraffe. That is unusual. This would appear to be a very special place. They did not burn the spearheads by chance. They brought them from hundreds of kilometers away and intentionally burned them. So many pieces of the puzzle fit together here. It has to represent a ritual.” concludes Sheila Coulson. It was a major archaeological find five years ago that made it possible for Sheila Coulson to date the finds in this little cave in Botswana. Up until the turn of the century, archaeologists believed that human civilisation developed in Europe after our ancestors migrated from Africa. This theory was crushed by Archaeologist Christopher Henshilwood when he published his find of traces from a Middle Stone Age dwelling in the Blombos Cave in Southern Cape, South Africa.” – sciencedaily.com

The Rise of Inequality: patriarchy and state hierarchy inequality

To me, patriarchy, as well as state inequality, were a gradual path of moving away from egalitarianism socially and economically to one of inequality to me, going from 12,000 years ago and the split of women’s status, then the spread of Neolithic farming sowed the seeds of modern inequality 10,000 years ago. To around 8,000 years ago with the hoarding of many women mates excluding other men (17 WOMEN REPRODUCED FOR EVERY ONE MAN) then around 7,000 years ago with the emergence of the male god and inequality in burials between women and men reaching its extreme around 6,000 years ago with proto (male) kings, which is to me also the beginning of the ideas of state or leads to the new ideas of states. The ideas of states emerge around 5,500 but not until around 5,000 years ago become more formalized in Egypt and the emergence

of male-run empire-state countries and the formalization of state-sanctioned patriarchy. This grows ever stronger worldwide until around 2,000 years ago when it was the law of the land.

“The first major armed conflict that happened 13,000 years ago.”

“It’s well known that in most hunter-gatherer groups women used grinding stones to process food. Grinding stones have been found in Israel dating back at least 12,000 years ago associated with ovens, suggesting the routine making of dough and baking of bread. So, the signatures of so-called women’s work shows that bread making and baking, and even eating grains and wheat start around at least 12,000 years ago.” “10,000-year-old massacre” “Neolithic farming sowed the seeds of modern inequality 10,000 years ago” “8,000 YEARS AGO, 17 WOMEN REPRODUCED FOR EVERY ONE MAN”

“Inequality is nothing new. In fact, a new study finds it dates back more than 7,000 years, to the Neolithic era. The evidence shows farmers buried with tools had access to better land than those buried without. Early Neolithic women were more likely than men to have originated from areas outside those where their bodies were found, the study also found. This is a strong indication of patrilocality, a male-centered kinship system where females move to reside in the location of the males when they marry.”

“MESOPOTAMIAN Uruk was one of the first cities and was the main force of urbanization and state formation during the “Uruk period”, or ‘Uruk expansion’ (6,000–5,200 years ago). This period of 800 years saw a shift from small, agricultural villages to a larger urban center with a full-time bureaucracy, military, and stratified society. Moreover, around 5,600 years ago saw the invention of writing in Sumer at Uruk. Then by around 5,500 years ago is the first written evidence of religion in Sumerian cuneiform.”

“Hamoukar in central Syria appears to have been a full-blown city in the north reached big-city status by 6,500 years ago and may have been settled as long ago as 8,000 years ago long before the time Uruk statism colonists arrived and suddenly wiped out by invaders 5,500 years ago.”

“Around 5,000 years ago saw the first king/pharaoh of Egypt begins when the north and the south were united as one country empire under Narmer (Menes) founder of the First Dynasty. One scene depicts a ceremony in which captives and plunder are presented to King Narmer, with a record of animal and human plunder; 400,000 cattle, 1,422,000 goats, and 120,000 captives.”

First Patriarchy: Split of Women’s Status around 12,000 years ago & First Hierarchy: fall of Women’s Status around 5,000 years ago.

To me, the possibility of goddess symbolism as well as the beginnings of patriarchy which may go as far back as around 12,000 years ago as a point leading to its beginning. And yet the first written establishment of women’s rights is around 4,000 years ago and at the same time, from around 12,000 years ago women who were somewhat respected or in admiration (such as shamans) and existed in relative egalitarianism in general but this began to change and began to increasingly not be seen as special or magical but as an object, since animals were being domesticated and humans started understanding birthing women in a general way started to be seen as an object to domesticate with the beginnings of patriarchy. At this time, it seems the female goddess

figurines/archetypes/avatars are seen to split into two different personalities: Good girl (most of them) and Bad girl (especially later in India), domesticated and undomesticated. Most archetype of sexualized fertility goddess symbolism or features seem to be that of the domestic woman and only a few are the undomesticated highly sexualized and highly powerful, from the extremes of feminism to highly promiscuous. Around 13,000 years ago, most likely all goddesses originate but the domesticated one may have originated thousands of years ago with all the venus figurines that go why back to the beginnings of human totemistic religion expression presumably the venus of Hohle Fels dated to between around 40,000 to 35,000 years ago though it is likely more akin to an artifact of hunting magic, a spirit or ancestor who knows. Although some of those figurines could have been seen as toys or for some other unknown reason, however, the difference around 12,000 years ago, a new and very non-toy like set of images and figurines were found that are highly sexualize and seems more like pornography instead toys for children. Moreover, around 12,000 years ago there seems to be increased development of fertility cults and the beginnings of the birth/sex goddess paganistic symbolism. There seemed to be many of the "bad girl/undomesticated woman" expressed in lajja gauri/sheila-na-gig styles of sexualized fertility cult goddesses, which are similar as well as recurring and seemingly both connected and disconnected to the mother goddess religious beliefs or religious beliefs. Shaktism cults are connected to the early depictions of lajja gauri found on Indus Valley seals. The Indus/ Harappan script dates to between around 5,500 to 3,900 years ago. Shaktism (doctrine of the goddess) is a major tradition of hinduism female is considered to comprise metaphysical reality and the goddess is supreme and includes a variety of goddesses, all considered aspects of the same supreme goddess. Shaktism's goddesses evolved more adding to its pantheon of goddesses after the decline of buddhism in India, wherein hindu and buddhist goddesses were combined to form the Mahavidya, a list of ten goddesses. Shaktism encompasses a nearly endless variety of beliefs and practices from primitive animism to the philosophical paganistic seeking to access the Shakti (divine energy) considered to comprise metaphysical reality of the goddesses' nature. Similar ideas to the shaktism religious thinking is found in Jainism (vidya and shasana devis), in buddhism (tantric buddhism), in sikhism (Shakta goddesses, particularly chandi seen as a fierce warrior) and I am not trying to say that lajja gauri or Shaktism where at the beginning from around 12,000 years ago, just they offer a similar frame of reference to add in conceptual understanding of the ideas involved in this early expression of ritualistic/cultural behaviors in relation to the possibility of the beginnings of patriarchy. This archetype of sexualized fertility goddess seems to embody other goddesses, she has a sexualized aspect, but she can be a mother or warrior too. However, it is how she is different from the others, not just mothers, protectors, or leaders, this goddess is associated with abundance and fertility involving erotic pleasure and sexual intercourse. Furthermore, this goddess archetype's artistic representations, most often, involves a nude fertility cult goddess/ancestor/spirit who offers herself with her legs apart and a prominent available vulva (presumably for sex but for some berthing could also apply. Further, most fertility goddesses the world over are not completely similar but many are shown as headless, faceless and some are even dead faced, while giving prominent focus to the genitals. Here are a few possible ideas to explain why a female/goddess figurine would be headless, faceless or dead faced. One reason is there where totemistic objects referencing a spirit, force of nature (such as fertility), or clan ancestor/shaman that where are in time went on seen as something to control, domesticate and dominate and thus females became generally seen as just

objects. Another reason is that it could have ties with the skull cult, which saw removing the head as removing the essence of the person. Therefore, the fact that a goddess would be represented without a head or face could symbolize she was not human or a dead human. This archetype of sexualized fertility goddess as times is displayed with arms bent, usually upwards, which could be seen as connecting bull's horns or expressing moon cycles. After 12,000 years ago paganism likely gets polytheism where this style of archetype of sexualized fertility goddess seems to split some from the mother/birth goddess cult. She starts off as looking female then becomes more stylize and symbolic in some regions such as a frog as well as a symbol; such as a swastika or is expressed more sexualized and has been sometimes interpreted as the creator deity and the oldest representation in some countries. Though the swastika archetype is not always an archetype sexualized fertility goddess representation, its origins are interconnected with this archetype and other female deities and animal spirits as far back as 12,000 years ago in Mezin, Ukraine and likely used as a type of magic in rituals. The four arms of the swastika may represent the four 4 aspects of nature: sun/fire, wind, water, or soil, the four seasons, or crude symbolized lunar crescent calendar which is similar to the lunar crescent that is common later in islam. The jewish/kabbalah "star of David" hexagram has been used, without identifying a male, to represent a jewish mystical concept which is why it is thought to originate as a symbol of a calendar system, representing the 12 months of a year. The first archetype sexualized fertility goddess, as a swastika reference, seems clearer in a 9,000 years old green frog goddess swastika pendent from the Balkans. Around 7,500 to 6,800 years ago in northern Mesopotamia/Iraq and in the Hassuna-Samarra of the north and east Fertile Crescent where the swastika archetype is depicted on pottery as four goddesses or four animals. The archetype of sexualized fertility goddess was found as a 12,000 years old carving on a rock floor at Gobekli Tepe Turkey, around 9,000 to 8,000 years old represented wall figures at Catal Huyuk, Turkey, around 9,000 years old clay figurine at Hacilar, Turkey, around 8,300 years old figurine in Greece, around 8,300 to 8,000 years old figurine in Serbia, around 6,600 to 6,500 years old stone pendent in Macedonia, around 6,000 years old figurine and pottery art in China, around 5,000 years old rock carving in Croatia, around 5,000 years old rock art in Philippines, around 5,000 years old figures, statues, carvings, paintings, and textiles in India, and around 4,000 years old gold figures and a gold seal in Turkmenistan just to stylistically reference but a few archetype of sexualized fertility goddesses. After 4,000 years, there are many countries and/or cultures around the world with similar archetype of sexualized fertility style goddess designs or connected hidden symbolic iconography such as a swastika archetype used by Sumerians, Mediterranean, and Indus Valley Civilization as well as the Turkey, India, Iran, Armenia, Nepal, China, Japan, Korea, and Europe. This symbolism was most widely used by hindus, jainas, buddhists, and Celtic as brigit's cross for the Celtic goddess brigit, also used by wiccans. For some, there is a distinction between right-hand "clockwise" swastikas and left-hand "counterclockwise" swastikas or sauvastikas, which stands for goddess, and magical practices. The right-hand swastika is considered a solar symbol or sun cross, whereas the left-hand swastika often represents the goddess lakshmi "wellbeing" or goddess kali, both positive and aggressive.

Women were much more prominent in religion before 5,500. There is what is believed to be a female shaman burial with a matching carved ivory female head belonging to the Pavlovian culture 29,000 to 25,000 a variant of the Gravettian/(Gravettian culture 33,000 to 22,000 years ago), dated to 29,000 to 25,000-years old Dolní Vestonice, Moravia, Czech Republic. A carved ivory figure

in the shape of a female head was discovered near the huts. The left side of the figure's face was distorted image is believed to be a description of elder female's burial around 40 years old, she was ritualistically placed beneath a pair of mammoth scapulae, one leaning against the other. Surprisingly, the left side of the skull was disfigured in the same manner as the aforementioned carved ivory figure, indicating that the figure was an intentional depiction of this specific individual. The bones and the earth surrounding the body contained traces of red ocher, a flint spearhead had been placed near the skull, and one hand held the body of a fox. This evidence suggests that this was the burial site of a shaman. This is the oldest site not only of ceramic figurines and artistic portraiture but also of evidence of early female shamans. Archaeologists usually describe two regional variants: the western Gravettian, known namely from cave sites in France, Spain and Britain, and the eastern Gravettian in Central Europe and Russia. The eastern Gravettians — they include the Pavlovian culture — were specialized mammoth hunters, whose remains are usually found not in caves but in open air sites. The origins of the Gravettian people are not clear, they seem to appear simultaneously all over Europe. Though they carried distinct genetic signatures, the Gravettians and Aurignacians before them were descended from the same ancient founder population. According to genetic data, 37,000 years ago, all Europeans can be traced back to a single 'founding population' that made it through the last ice age. Furthermore, the so-called founding fathers were part of the Aurignacian culture which was displaced by another group of early humans members of the Gravettian culture. Between 37,000 years ago and 14,000 years ago, different groups of Europeans were descended from a single founder population. To a greater extent than their Aurignacian predecessors, they are known for their Venus figurines.

5,500 -3,000 Years Ago – (Egypt), found nude badarian cultural artifact Female figurine with bird traits as well as her arms are raised as either she is flying or her arms are a bull's horns. Could this be a representation of Nut a nude goddess of the sky who depicted as having bird arms or a bull. She was the sky and a symbol of protecting the dead when they enter the afterlife. Moreover, among her jobs was to envelop and protect Ra sun god as well as re-birthing of Ra every morning. about 5,200–5,000 years ago there is more elaborate grave goods in burials and there is writing. Predynastic Period— the Naqada culture— derives its name from the site of Naqada, in Upper Egypt with a vast cemetery of more than 3,000 graves with an unusual nature compared with those previously known in Egypt, humble burials consisted of little more than the body of the deceased in foetal position, wrapped in an animal skin, sometimes covered by a mat, and most often deposited in a simple pit hollowed out of the sand. None of the offerings accompanying the deceased corresponded to the usual hallmarks of pharaonic civilization, pottery vessels of black-topped polished red ware, zoomorphic schist palettes, combs and spoons of bone or ivory, and flint knives and other artefacts. The first Naqada phase (Amratian) lies between 6,000 and 5,500 years ago, followed by the second phase (Gerzean), from 5,500 to 5,200 years ago, and the final Predynastic phase runs from 5,200 to 5,000 years ago. several thousand Predynastic graves between them (15,000 for the whole Predynastic Period). Naqada III extended all over Egypt and was characterized by some notable firsts: The first hieroglyphs, The first graphical narratives on palettes, & The first truly royal cemeteries. The Amratian 6,000 to 5,500 years ago is not different from the earlier Badarian possibly around 7,000 years ago flourishing around 6,400 to 6,000 years ago. The burial rituals and the grave goods that both may share a connection. In general, the Amratian dead were buried in simple oval pits in a contracted position, lying on the left side with

the head pointing south, looking towards the west. A mat was placed on the ground below the deceased, and sometimes the head rested on a pillow of straw or leather. Another mat or the skin of an animal, covered or enclosed the deceased and most covered the offerings. Although simple burials of single individuals were in the majority, multiple burials were also fairly frequent, most notably involving a woman (possibly the mother) and a newborn infant. Compared with the previous period, larger burial places appeared, provided with coffins of wood or earth, and more lavishly equipped. Although plundered, the Amratian tombs of Hierakonpolis are remarkable for their rectangular form and unusual size. In two instances, the inclusion of magnificent disc-shaped porphyry maceheads probably indicates the burials of powerful individuals. The Amratian culture differs from the Badarian in terms of types of grave goods and consequent signs of hierarchy. Pottery holds white painted designs comprising geometrical, animal, and vegetal motifs seem to be the beginnings of an iconography at the core of pharaonic civilization. Human figures were present into two different types with hunting most prominent, and the second is the victorious warrior. The depiction comprises two human figures among plant motifs; the larger figure, with stalks or plumes fastened in his hair, lifts his arms above his head, while his virility is unequivocally marked by a penis or penis sheath. Interlaced ribbons descending from between his legs may represent decorated cloth. A white line emerges from the larger figure's chest and wraps around the neck of the second figure, a much smaller person with long hair. A swelling on the back of the smaller figure could represent bound arms suggest conqueror and the vanquished domination appears to be the prototype of traditional scenes of victory in the pharaonic phase. The graves and the funerary offerings indicate not so much increasing hierarchization as a tendency towards social diversity in the Naqada I culture. The offerings in this period appeared initially to be intended simply to mark the identity of the deceased. It is not until the Naqada II phase 5,500 to 5,200 years ago (and even more so Naqada III) that larger accumulations of funerary artefacts are clearly in evidence. The funerary statuettes are particularly significant. Both men and women are represented standing, more rarely seated, with emphasis on the primary sexual characteristics. Only a few of the thousands of excavated tombs contained such statuettes, and usually they occurred only singly, groups of two or three in one tomb being comparatively rare. The maximum number found in a single burial was a set of sixteen figurines. Based on an analysis of the other offerings, the tombs that contained multiple statuettes were not particularly rich in other respects, and such small sculpted figures were sometimes the sole funerary offering. The use of copper and flint knives as funerary offerings raises the same kind of question during the Naqada II phase. Found on small throwsticks of carved ivory or on the tips of hippopotamus or elephant tusks, the one repeated feature of these representations is the presence of a triangular beard, often balanced by a sort of 'phrygian' cap pierced by a suspension hole. Unlike women, men were no longer being solely identified by their primary sexual characteristics, but by a secondary sexual characteristic and the social status that this conferred on them. The beard was evidently a symbol of power, and, in the form of the ceremonial 'false beard', it later became strictly reserved for the chins of kings and gods. Another symbol of power that characterizes the Naqada I phase is the disc-shaped macehead, usually carved from a hard stone, but sometimes also occurring in softer materials such as limestone, terracotta, or even unfired pottery, and cosmetic palettes constituted the item of choice for funerary equipment during the Amratian. These palettes exploded into a diversity of forms, from a simple oval shape, sometimes incised with figures of animals, to complete zoomorphs

(animal imagery or deities depicted in animal form). The picture derived from the analysis of the tombs and their contents is of a structured and diversified society, with a tendency towards hierarchical organization traits of pharaonic civilization can already be seen in embryonic form. The Naqada II phase was characterized primarily by expansion, as the Gerzean culture extended from its source at Naqada northwards towards the Delta (Minshat Abu Omar) and southwards as far as Nubia. There was a distinct acceleration of the funerary trend first seen in the Amratian, whereby a few individuals were buried in larger, more elaborate tombs containing richer and more abundant offerings. Gerzean cemeteries comprise a wide range of grave types, ranging from small oval or round pits, poorly provided with offerings, to burials in pottery vessels and the construction of rectangular pits subdivided by mud-brick partitions, with specific compartments for offerings. There were coffins of wood and air-dried pottery, as well as the first indications of the wrapping of the body in strips of linen. Early 'mummification' of this type is attested in a double tomb at Adaïma, an Upper Egyptian site near Hierakonpolis. The Naqada II burials generally remained simple, but multiple burials, containing up to five individuals, became more common. Funerary rituals appear to have become more complex, sometimes involving dismemberment of the body, a practice that was not attested in the preceding period. A tomb at Naqada had a series of long bones and five crania were arranged along the tomb walls, and at Adaïma there are some examples of skulls detached from their torsos. The possibility of human sacrifice at Naqada, and two cases of throat slitting followed by decapitation have been identified at Adaïma. Possible evidence for self-sacrifice could be an early prelude to the mass human sacrifices around the Early Dynastic royal tombs at Abydos, which represented a turning point in the emergence of the Egyptian kingship of the Dynastic Period. Art depictions of a boat represents both a mode of travel and a status symbol which from this date onwards connected to the Nile, flowing from the north to the south, had also been transformed into a mythical river on which the first gods sailed. The links between the human and cosmic orders were already being established. During the Naqada II phase, an artifact as the macehead had become mysteriously charged as a symbol of power, and in the pharaonic period it was the weapon characteristically held by the victorious king. The Naqada III phase, 5,200 to 5,000 years ago, is the last phase of the Predynastic Period, The Emergence of the Egyptian State (5,200 to 4,686 years ago). It was during this period that Egypt was first unified into a large territorial state, and the political consolidation that laid the foundations for the Early Dynastic state of the 1st and 2nd Dynasties must also have occurred then. In the latter part of this phase there is evidence of kings preceding those of the 1st Dynasty, in what is now called 'Dynasty o'. They were buried at Abydos near the royal cemetery of the 1st Dynasty. State Formation and Unification from the Naqada II phase onwards, highly differentiated burials are found in cemeteries in Upper Egypt (but not in Lower Egypt). Élite burials in these cemeteries contained large quantities of grave goods, sometimes made from exotic materials such as gold and lapis lazuli. These burials are symbolic of an increasingly hierarchical society, probably representing the earliest competition and the aggrandizement of local polities in Upper Egypt, as economic interaction and long-distance trade developed. Found two large niched mud-brick tombs and a cemetery with Early Dynastic graves and the sudden appearance of a new style of 'royal' burial at the end of Naqada III, together with the more impoverished (earlier) burials in the cemeteries far to the north, probably coinciding with the absorption of the Naqada polity into a larger one. In contrast, in the Umm el-Qaeab region of Abydos the graves in one area (Cemeteries U and B and the 'royal cemetery') evolved from

fairly undifferentiated burials in early Naqada times, to an élite cemetery in late Naqada II, and finally to the burial place of the kings of Dynasty o and the 1st Dynasty. One Naqada III tomb, U-j, dating to 5,150 years ago with 150 small labels found with what appear to be the earliest known hieroglyphs and possible with traces of what could be a wooden shrine in the burial chamber and an ivory model sceptre demonstrate that this was the tomb of a ruler, possibly King Scorpion. There are rich burial suggesting that élite individuals of considerable means were being buried at Hierakonpolis, but that they were still not of the same class as the rulers at Abydos. Whereas Naqada was politically insignificant in the Early Dynastic Period, Abydos was the most important center for the cult of the dead king, and Hierakonpolis remained an important cult center associated with the god Horus, symbolic of the living king. All ceremonial objects were found in or near the area Egyptians establish camps and way stations in the northern Sinai, but the ceramic evidence also suggests that they established a highly organized network of settlements in southern Palestine where an Egyptian population was in residence. The importance of the Delta for Egyptian contact with south-west Asia is also suggested by enigmatic evidence from Buto. Lower Egyptian Predynastic culture at this site, ceramic clay 'nails' and a so-called Grubenkopfnagel (a tapering cone with a concave burnished end) that resemble artefacts used in the Mesopotamian Uruk culture to decorate temple façades. Possibly demonstrating contact with the Uruk culture network may have taken place via northern Syria, as the earliest Predynastic items at Buto contain sherds decorated with whitish stripes characteristic of the Syrian ware. Both imported and Egyptian-made cylinder seals, an artefact type unquestionably invented in Mesopotamia, are found in a few élite graves of the Naqada II and III phases. Beads and small artefacts in lapis lazuli, which could only have come from Afghanistan, are first found in Upper Egyptian Predynastic graves. Mesopotamian motifs also appear in Upper Egypt (and Lower Nubia), including the motif of the héros dompteur (a victorious human figure between two lions/ beasts), painted on the wall of a Tomb at Hierakonpolis, which dates to Naqada II. Other typically Mesopotamian motifs, such as the niched palace façade and high-prowed boats, are also found on Naqada II and III artefacts and also in the rock art. The styles of these motifs are more characteristic of the glyptic art of Susa in south-west Iran than of the Uruk culture, and the fact that such artefacts are not found in Lower Egypt has raised the possibility of some southern route of contact between Susa and Upper Egypt. In Lower Nubia there are numerous burials containing many Naqada craft goods were probably obtained through trade and exchange. The early Egyptian state was a centrally controlled polity ruled by a (god-) king from the Memphis region. What is truly unique about the early state in Egypt is the integration of rule over an extensive geographic region, in contrast to contemporaneous polities in Nubia, Mesopotamia, and Syria– Palestine. Although there is seeming evidence of foreign contact around 4,000 years ago, the Early Dynastic state that emerged in Egypt was unique and indigenous in character. Graves and tombs, found in this region from the 1st Dynasty onwards funerary evidence suggests that the Memphis region was the administrative center of the state and also indicates that the early Egyptian state was highly stratified in its social organization. In the south, Abydos remained the most important cult center. The kings of the 1st Dynasty were buried at Abydos, another indication of the Upper Egyptian origins of this state. From the very beginning of the Dynastic Period the institution of kingship was a strong and powerful one and would remain so throughout the major historical periods. Nowhere else in the ancient Near East at this early date was kingship so important and central to control of the early state. The nature of early Egyptian

civilization was expressed primarily through monumental architecture, especially the royal tombs and funerary enclosures at Abydos, and the large tombs of high officials at North Saqqara. Formal art styles, which are characteristically Egyptian, also emerged in the Naqada III/ Dynasty o and Early Dynastic periods.

First proto-king in the Balkans, Varna culture around 6,500 years ago?

I surmise the first proto-king originates in the Balkans Varna culture's Bulgarian cemetery dating to around 6,500 years old. Moreover, while 65 out of the 320 burials held 3100 gold objects but only five burials: 1, 4, 36, 41, and 43 comprise over 80% of the gold found. Yet of these five burials only grave 43 shown here contained an actual skeletal while the others are symbolic faces. These metaphorical burial faces, to me, both represent the clay head around 6,500 years old, found submerged in Varna Lake from the Hamangia Culture, of which I think could relate to the emergence of the first male gods.

"The oldest gold treasure in the world, belonging to the Varna culture, was discovered in the Varna Necropolis and dates to 6,600-6,200 years ago. Varna is the third-largest city in Bulgaria and the largest city and seaside resort on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. Situated strategically in the Gulf of Varna, the city has been a major economic, social and cultural center for almost three millennia. Varna, historically known as Odessos (Ancient Greek: Ὀδησσός), grew from a Thracian seaside settlement to a major seaport on the Black Sea."

"The Varna culture belongs to the later Neolithic of northeastern Bulgaria, is contemporary and closely related with Gumelnița in southern Romania, often considered as local variants. It is characterized by polychrome pottery and rich cemeteries, the most famous of which are Varna Necropolis, the eponymous site, and the Durankulak complex, which comprises the largest prehistoric cemetery in southeastern Europe."

"The culture had sophisticated religious beliefs about afterlife and developed hierarchical status differences: it constitutes the oldest known burial evidence of an elite male. The end of the fifth millennium BC is the time that Marija Gimbutas, founder of the Kurgan hypothesis claims the transition to male dominance began in Europe. The high status male was buried with remarkable amounts of gold, held a war axe or mace and wore a gold penis sheath. The bull-shaped gold platelets perhaps also venerated virility, instinctive force, and warfare. Gimbutas holds that the artifacts were made largely by local craftspeople."

"Burials at Varna have some of the world's oldest gold jewelry. There are crouched and extended inhumations. Some graves do not contain a skeleton, but grave gifts (cenotaphs). The symbolic (empty) graves are the richest in gold artifacts. Around 3000 gold artifacts were found, with a weight of approximately 6 kilograms. Grave 43 contained more gold than has been found in the entire rest of the world for that epoch. Three symbolic graves contained masks of unfired clay. The weight and the number of gold finds in the Varna cemetery exceeds by several times the combined weight and number of all of the gold artifacts found in all excavated sites of the same millenium, 5000-4000 BC, from all over the world, including Mesopotamia and Egypt"."

“Varna Culture Decline: The discontinuity of the Varna, Karanovo, Vinča and Lengyel cultures in their main territories and the large scale population shifts to the north and northwest are indirect evidence of a catastrophe of such proportions that cannot be explained by possible climatic change, desertification, or epidemics. Direct evidence of the incursion of horse-ridingwarriors is found, not only in single burials of males under barrows, but in the emergence of a whole complex of Indo-European cultural traits.”

Copper Age migrations likely motivated to escape war/violence and climate caused problems brought waves of migration from Turkey and Iran as well as ideas or possibly people as well from the Balkans to north Israel as well small parts of Jordan around 6,500–5,800 years ago.

6,500–5,800 years ago in Israel Late Chalcolithic (Copper Age) Period in the Southern Levant Seems to Express Northern Levant Migrations, Cultural and Religious Transfer

“The Funnel Beaker Culture – “First Farmers of Scandinavia” around 6,200-4,650 years ago marks the arrival of Megalithic structures in Scandinavia from western Europe. At graves, the people sacrificed ceramic vessels that contained food along with amber jewelry and flint-axes. Flint-axes and vessels were also deposed in streams and lakes near the farmlands, and virtually all Sweden’s 10,000 flint axes that have been found from this culture were probably sacrificed in water. Ancient DNA and the peopling of the British Isles – pattern and process of the Neolithic transition 6000 years ago.”

The first human-caused climate change, dramatically changed how nature works, such as the way plant and animal communities were structured on Earth around 6,000 years ago.

The first human migrations spread the first plague is believed to have contributed to the plunge of Europe’s settlements around. As well as the close contact between humans and animals and the accumulation of food, likely led to poorer sanitary conditions and an increased risk of pathogen around 6,000-5,000 years ago.

The first passage tomb thought to lead to the afterlife from Ireland, close to when people first began farming in the region that seems to mark a transition towards a time when religion played a greater role in people’s lives 5,800-5,500 years ago.

The first birth of the State, the rise of Hierarchy, and the fall of Women’s status 5,500-5,000 years ago. And more than 5,000 years ago a nomadic group of shepherds rode out of the steppes of eastern Europe to conquer the rest of the continent. The group, today is known as the Yamna or Kurgan/Pit Grave culture, brought with them an innovative new technology, wheeled carts, which enabled them to quickly occupy new lands.

“Gender-differentiated burial rites have been attested in Eneolithic complexes of the cultures: Hamangia, Varna, Tiszapolgár, Bodrogkeresztúr and Lublin-Volhynia, the Late Linear Pottery culture (Brześć Kujawski group), as well as numerous regional groups of the Corded Ware and the Bell Beaker cultures.”

What was it about the Copper Age that encouraged people to create social hierarchies? And why in the Balkans on the shores of the Black Sea?

“The people who built the Varna cemetery had more on their minds than subsistence. “The whole population was in good health and had a well-balanced diet. These people were not rich or poor in today’s sense. They had reached a moment where they started to think about more than survival. Until the invention of metallurgy, all the tools humanity had at its disposal were crafted from stone, wood, bone, antler, or clay. But metal is much different and likely wound have been seen as magical as it could be shaped and worked into tools and decorations in a way that must have seemed otherworldly as well as achieve otherworldly power. Metal is never used up. It can be recycled endlessly.” The first metalworkers must have seemed like wizards.”

“But while stone and bone were widely available—materials anyone could pick up off the ground—malachite, azurite, and gold were all hard to come by. A pound of copper requires mining hundreds of pounds of copper ore; it takes up to ten tons of material to yield an ounce of gold. Mining, smelting, and working metal took special skills and lots of time. All those man-hours needed to be organized and ordered. That’s where the man in grave 43 and his fellow one-percenters came in. In this way things had changed and for the very first time humanity was forever changed to a new crucial point in human history—part of society must work with metal, and others must feed them. That separation has to be ordered and regulated, with somebody assigning roles. The person making decisions has to have a lot of power to keep society separated.”

“What happened to the society that once existed here? The golden age entombed in the cemetery was brief. The bones were all buried within a few centuries, between 6,600 and 6,200 years ago. What happened next is an enduring mystery. All along the lower Danube, settlements and cultures that flourished during the Copper Age come to an abrupt end around 6,000 years ago. Suddenly, settlements are abandoned; the people vanish. For six centuries afterwards, the region seems to be empty.”

“For decades, scholars assumed the sudden abandonment was the result of an invasion by the mounted Indo-European warriors Gimbutas had written about, rampaging through the region. More recently, researchers have begun considering another possibility—climate change. The collapse of the Copper Age coincides with a warming world, with larger swings in temperatures and rainfall. The villages that produced the gold found here are now underwater: The Black Sea was as much as 25 feet lower than it is today.”

Science vs. Religion: The Conflict Thesis Revisited (2018) by Bart Klink

The greatest myth in the history of science and religion holds that they have been in a state of constant conflict.

—historian Ronald Numbers

The 'insurmountable hostility' between science and religion is a caricature, a thought-cliché, perhaps useful as a satire on groupthink, but hardly representative of reality.

—sociologist Elaine Ecklund

Today, this stereotype of the warfare of science and religion lingers on in the backwaters of Western culture. Yet it has largely lost its credibility.

—theologian Alister McGrath

There is a superficial conflict but deep concord between science and theistic religion, but superficial concord and deep conflict between science and naturalism.

—Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga

Introduction

It is commonly held that science and religion are in conflict. Most people are vaguely aware of the dispute between Galileo Galilei and the Catholic Church. More recent is the controversy about teaching evolution and creationism, especially in the United States. Even in a secular country like the Netherlands, the "year of Darwin" (2009) heated up a debate that many had thought to have already been settled. Prominent contemporary atheists have also argued that science and religion are in conflict, leaving religion with the short end of the stick.

Other intellectuals have contested this conflict thesis (or warfare thesis), however, as the opening quotations demonstrate. More sophisticated believers and historians have objected that this conflict thesis (or model) has been supplanted, and that a lot of scientists—even top scientists—are religious. A prime example is Francis Collins, former head of the Human Genome Project and current director of the National Institutes of Health. Do these facts provide good grounds to discard the conflict thesis?

Several different questions should be distinguished in any discussion about the relationship between science and religion. Since different questions have different answers, nuances are often overlooked in discussions about the subject. There are issues concerning the history of the relationship between science and religion, but there are also sociological, psychological and philosophical issues. All of those subjects are complex and often oversimplified. This essay will deal with a number of different questions about the multifaceted relationship between science and religion. However, before we dive into all of that, we must first answer a different question: what do we mean by the notoriously difficult terms science and religion?

For the purpose of this essay, we can restrict religion to its doctrinal content, which mainly depends on the particular concept of god(s) and their supposed acts. The ritualistic and ethical aspects of religion hardly play a role in the present debate. Most religious people think God interacts with our world through revelation, miracles, and answering prayers. Such a personal God is often considered to have human traits, such as the ability to love, be wrathful, and act accordingly. This is classical theism, the standard view of God in the three major monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Polytheistic religions have multiple gods that (can) interfere with our world, often each with his or her own personal traits.

Intervening and personal gods are central to all theistic religions (monotheistic or polytheistic). Theism should be distinguished from both deism and pantheism. On a deistic conception, God started the universe and let it run on its own ever since, without intervening. This view of God was popular among the intelligentsia during the Enlightenment, but has few adherents today. A deistic God would hardly be in conflict with science since he does not interfere with the natural order. On pantheism, God is equated with nature; in the words of the philosopher Spinoza (1632-1677), he's

"Deus sive Natura" ("God or Nature"). Equating God with nature makes pantheism hard to distinguish from atheism. Pantheism often just seems to be a way of speaking about nature metaphorically. For example, Albert Einstein once decried quantum mechanics with the famous phrase "God doesn't play dice with the universe," and atheistic cosmologist Stephen Hawking characterized our potential knowledge of a "theory of everything" as knowing "the mind of God." Consequently, this essay will deal exclusively with the relationship between science and theism. Not only does the theistic view of God have the most adherents by far, but it is also the view that has the most to fear from science, as will be argued below.

For quite some time, philosophers of science have debated what is meant by the term science. For our purposes, two components of science need to be distinguished: its methodology, as well as the body of knowledge generated by employing this methodology. The "scientific method" simply refers to the systematic, empirical testing of hypotheses. This includes historical claims, which cannot repeatedly be tested under controlled conditions, but can be made plausible when multiple lines of (historical) evidence converge. The "body of knowledge" refers to the highly coherent picture that the conjoined sciences give us about reality, from the communication between neurons to the structure of space-time. The two components of science cannot be viewed completely separately, for the current body of knowledge leads to new hypotheses, and background knowledge plays an important role in testing claims.

This essay argues that science and (theistic) religion are in conflict with each other. This conflict manifests itself in four different domains/levels: historical, sociological, psychological, and philosophical. Historically, there is a conflict between the content of religious doctrines and the developing body of scientific knowledge. The sociological conflict consists of the fact that scientists are significantly less religious than nonscientists, and that people of faith reject scientific findings on religious grounds. The psychological conflict lies in the debunking effect of the cognitive science of religion. Finally, the philosophical conflict arises because the sciences have made the existence of God and other theistic claims improbable.

The Historical Conflict

The conflict thesis (or warfare thesis) has been around for quite some time. It maintains that science and religion are continually in conflict, and that science ultimately turns out to be the winner whenever there is a contest between them. According to this view, the scientist fights a heroic battle against the religious establishment, which is then forced to hold on to its doctrines. This classic version of the conflict thesis originated mainly from two books: History of the Conflict between Religion and Science by John William Draper, published in 1874, and A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom by Andrew Dickson White, published in 1896.

Historical research in the past few decades, however, has showed that the conflict thesis, as put forth by Draper and White, has oversimplified matters. There was no continuous conflict, and many scientists, including the classic example of Galileo, were themselves religious. They saw scientific inquiry as a way of studying God's creation. Should we therefore discard the conflict thesis entirely? According to many historians, (liberal) theologians, and religious scientists, we should (as the opening quotations exemplify). Christian philosopher Kelly James Clark also

concludes that "the myth of continual and irreconcilable differences [between science and religion] needs to be put to its well-deserved final rest."

In its classical form (i.e., the Draper-White variety), the conflict thesis should indeed be discarded. But from this we cannot conclude that religion has nothing to fear from science. On this issue, it is important to separate the views of scientists themselves on the one hand, and the implications of their work on the other. It is undeniable that many scientists have been religious (in the past centuries as well as today), and therefore saw no conflict between science and (their form of) religion themselves. This does not mean, however, that their scientific findings were free from conflict with the prevailing religious doctrines. The conflict is rather to be found in the content of religious doctrines, which became untenable in the light of scientific development. Let me illustrate this with some examples.

Ancient Greek philosophers and physicians in the tradition of Hippocrates had already started to attribute phenomena like earthquakes, lightning, and many diseases to natural causes instead of gods. Similarly, the first-century AD Roman thinker Lucius Seneca thought that these kinds of phenomena were not produced by angry gods, but by natural causes. This contrasts sharply with many biblical stories, in which misfortune is often seen as a punishment from God. Nevertheless, during the Middle Ages Christian thinkers were often looking for natural causes of phenomena (so called secondary causes) even though they believed that God could intervene directly (as a primary cause).

Serious inquiry into natural causes gained momentum in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The most famous example from this period is undoubtedly the Italian Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). Though himself a Christian, Galileo clearly distinguished nature from Scripture, and insisted that one should be led by observation in discussions about nature. His intellectual predecessor, Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543), was reproached by the famous theological reformer Martin Luther for putting forth ideas that conflict with Scripture. Copernicus and Galileo not only undermined the authority of the Bible, but also the prevailing worldview that the earth is the center of the universe. This geocentrism was an astronomical notion, but one with major philosophical implications. It is part of the traditional Judeo-Christian worldview in which humans take a central position (anthropocentrism). The circular movements of the heavenly bodies in the firmament declare the perfection of God's handiwork. Geocentrism is also in line with the Bible, which states that the earth does not move (e.g., 1 Chronicles 16:30; Psalm 93:1) and that God caused the sun and the moon to stand still (Joshua 10:12-13), not the earth, as Luther reproached Copernicus. Even Hell, by Christians localized at the center of the earth—furthest away from Heaven—became problematic in light of the new heliocentrism. When Copernicus and Galileo started to undermine the prevailing geocentrism, even these religious ideas were brought under dispute.

The trial of Galileo is historically complex, a point that is often used as an argument against the idea that there is a real conflict between science and religion. As noted earlier, Galileo was a religious man, and the empirical grounds for his view were not as strong early on as they would later become. Moreover, there were conflicts at a personal level, and Luther's Protestant Reformation made the Catholic Church more stringent doctrinally. Galileo's views also conflicted with the prevailing Aristotelianism of the time. The Inquisition judged Galileo's views to be

"foolish and absurd in philosophy," but also "formally heretical since it explicitly contradicts in many places the sense of Holy Scripture, according to the literal meaning of the words and according to the common interpretation and understanding of the Holy Fathers and the doctors of theology." The last part of this verdict is especially interesting, for it grounds the rejection of heliocentrism explicitly on the Bible and Christian theological tradition. Galileo was allowed to consider his ideas as merely hypothetical, but he did not conform to this restriction, which resulted in his famous trial. The verdict clearly stated Galileo's transgression: "having held and believed a doctrine that is false and contrary to the divine and Holy Scriptures." Galileo was kept under house arrest until his death, and was compelled to renounce his heliocentric statements. He did not go to jail, but his intellectual imprisonment is abject and had to be terrible, especially for a scientist.

During this time, the idea that nature is governed by natural law (secondary causes) instead of direct divine intervention (primary causes) became more and more common in scientific circles. The scientific picture had become mechanistic. The French Catholic philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650) developed the idea that the entire universe consisted of eternal circular moving particles, and even speculated about how natural law could give rise to the solar system. The British physicist Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) provided another (similarly mechanistic) theory about the workings of the solar system. Newton was also religious, albeit unorthodox. To his mind, the natural workings of the solar system required a divine designer, and he needed God to intervene from time to time to maintain its stability. Later scientific developments by Pierre-Simon Laplace (1749-1827) and others showed that godly intervention was not necessary to account for the origin and stability of the solar system. This led to a famous attribution to Laplace in response to Napoleon Bonaparte's purported question about God's role in Laplace's system: "Je n'avais pas besoin de cette hypothèse-là" ("I have no need of that hypothesis").

In other fields of knowledge, appeals to supernatural explanations also started to decline throughout the seventeenth century. More and more, doctors provided natural accounts of medical disorders, though epidemics and madness were still ascribed to supernatural forces because their actual causes remained unknown. Epidemics and plagues, for example, were still regarded as punishments from God. In 1721 the governor of Massachusetts called for fasting and remorse because of an imminent epidemic, but a (Puritan) secretary saw more good in vaccination, which was then still in its infancy. Around that same time, lightning strikes were still seen by many people as divine punishments, but this belief gradually eroded away when lightning rods proved to be very effective in averting this supposed penalty from God.

The last two examples that I will mention concern developments in geology during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. The history of the earth and the biblical Flood were discussed in great deal during the seventeenth century. But new scientific developments not only showed that the earth was much older than was previously thought (on biblical grounds), but also that humans were not created separately from nonhuman animals. On the contrary, the evidence strongly suggested that slow, wasteful, and blind evolutionary mechanisms produced humankind, not direct creation by a perfectly good and all-powerful God. One could hardly deny that these developments had philosophical implications. Furthermore, they created doubts about theological matters like the historicity of Adam and Eve

and the Fall. These implications were apparently strong enough to compel Pope Pius XII to state explicitly in his encyclical Humani Generis (On Human Origin, 1950) that all humans descended from Adam and Eve. Again, religious doctrines were contested by scientific developments. The biblical stories of Creation and the Flood pretend to describe a historical reality, but these stories turned out to be false. Even the great Church Father St. Augustine (354-430 AD), often considered an advocate of reading the Bible allegorically, confirms his belief that Genesis also contains history. He explicitly denies that Genesis should only be read allegorically, and discusses issues that still concern creationists to this day. Even a religious concept as central as the idea of a soul has been made untenable by recent developments in psychology and neuroscience.

The scientific developments outlined above clearly demonstrate at least three things. First, they contravene biblical authority: the Bible turned out to be wrong about our place in the universe, the age of the earth, the Flood, and the creation of mankind, forcing intellectuals to put their trust in observation and experiment over revelation, at least in matters concerning astronomy, geology, and biology. Second, they show that scientific developments clearly have philosophical and religious implications. Both Galileo's heliocentrism and Darwin's theory of evolution changed irreversibly the traditional Judeo-Christian view about humankind and its place in the universe. The view that science and religion are completely separate, exemplified in Stephen Jay Gould famously dubbing them non-overlapping magisteria (NOMA), is therefore untenable. Finally, science has historically had a naturalizing tendency: naturalistic explanations provided by the developing sciences have debunked or made superfluous previously held supernatural explanations provided by religion. One could say that science 'desupernaturalizes' and provides a coherent naturalistic big picture of the universe. In sum, scientific developments—even when they were brought to us primarily by religious scholars—have led to a doctrinal drawback of religion. The role for God as a designer and governor of the world has been increasingly reduced over time. While religious proponents often speak of the dialogue between science and religion, with respect to religious doctrines, there has only been a monologue—one in favor of science.

The Sociological Conflict

Other questions about the relationship between science and religion are sociological. What do people—and scientists in particular—think about religion? What do they think about how science and religion relate? If science and religion can coexist peacefully, we might expect scientists to be as religious (or nonreligious) as nonscientists. But sociological data clearly show otherwise: scientists are significantly less religious than the general population, especially when they are at the top of their fields. Edward Larson and Larry Witham asked members of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS)—the scientific elite—if they believed in a personal God (i.e., subscribed to theism). In 1998, only 7% of NAS members did, down from 28% in 1914. Of the nontheists, 21% were agnostics and 72% were atheists. Even less religious are the top evolutionary biologists. Greg Graffin and William Provine showed that of only 4.7% of the evolutionary biologists in the NAS identified as theists, whereas 78% of them considered themselves to be naturalists—those who disbelieve in anything supernatural.

Wider and more detailed research has been done by Elaine Ecklund, who focused on scientists from major American universities—reputable scientists, but not all NAS members. Again, there

was a considerable difference in the views of these scientists compared to nonscientists, albeit a smaller one compared to that of only NAS members. Of these reputable scientists, 64% were atheists or agnostics, compared to only 6% of nonscientists. Whereas 63% of nonscientists did not doubt God's existence, only 9% of reputable scientists had the same stance. Evangelical Christianity was particularly unpopular among the scientists: only 2% of them identified with it, compared to a sizeable 28% of the American population. Furthermore, the believing scientists had rather liberal religious beliefs. Another 15% of the scientists said that they had a religious identity even though they did not believe in God (with 75% of the Jewish scientists being atheistic).

It would be interesting to know why scientists as a whole are far less religious than the general population. Ecklund analyzes contributing factors on the basis of in-depth interviews. Apart from practicing science itself, she lists bad experience with religion, the problem of evil/suffering, lack of interest, and having had a secular upbringing. These factors are not unique to scientists, however, and thus could account for unbelief in anyone. Her list of factors, therefore, does not seem to provide a plausible explanation for the nonbelief of scientists per se, but Ecklund provides no further discussion. A plausible explanation is nevertheless easy to fathom: scientists typically have a more analytic thinking style, which tends to enhance religious skepticism and disbelief.

Another sociological question concerns the extent to which science is rejected by the faithful, as well as why they reject it. If science and religion were really in harmony, one would not expect to see a large difference in the acceptance of science by believers when compared to nonbelievers. Again, the data show otherwise. Polls consistently show that about 45% of the American population hold creationist beliefs. In 2010 David P. Wilson found that, worldwide, 59% of Christians were creationists, while only 7% accepted natural evolution. Interestingly, the creationists stated that their main reason for rejecting evolution was not the (alleged) lack of evidence for it, but was religious (e.g., due to a literal reading of Genesis, or because evolution undermines the doctrine of being created in God's image). Wilson also looked at why atheists rejected the existence of gods. Their answers mainly cited the lack of evidence for gods, as well as the perception that Scripture conflicts with science. Wilson also found that the Christians were more certain about their beliefs than the atheists were, implying less skepticism on the part of the Christians in his survey.

The rejection of evolution is not only a Christian problem. Salman Hameed reports that only 8-20% of the Muslims he surveyed accept the theory of evolution. Human evolution is particularly controversial among them. Hameed also reports that out of 18 Pakistani science teachers, a full 15 of them reject human evolution. They nonetheless believe that there is no conflict between science and Islam. The low acceptance of evolution is confirmed for Muslim students, too, and to a lesser extent, Muslim science teachers. According to data from the World Value Survey, Muslims from countries like Pakistan, Egypt, Morocco, and Qatar strongly agree with the statement "Whenever science and religion conflict, religion is always right" (65-98%).

These data on Christian and Muslim views about evolution not only show that evolution is widely rejected, but also that this rejection has religious roots. There is a clear correlation between the rejection of evolution and belief in God. Leslie Rissler, Sarah Duncan, and Nicholas Caruso found that religiosity, rather than education, best explains students' views on evolution. Moreover, nearly

two-thirds of Americans said that they would continue to hold certain religious beliefs even if they were rejected by science.

Of course, not all religious people are this reluctant to accept scientific findings. Religious scientists and liberal theologians often have no problem with, for example, evolution—or so it seems. The evangelical geneticist Francis Collins and Pope John Paul II are often paraded as thinkers who accept both evolution and their religion. These sorts of religious intellectuals are sometimes put on display as evidence against the conflict thesis. However, neither Collins nor Pope John Paul II accept evolution without qualification, for they argue that our moral and mental faculties could not have evolved naturalistically. Evolutionary biologists, by contrast, understand evolution to be a natural and undirected process that also created our moral and mental faculties, regardless of whether believers who accept evolution see it this way. Furthermore, they do not represent the believing population, as shown by the data above. Finally, these examples of (apparent) harmony only show that science and religion can both be accepted by the same person, not that science and religion are philosophically consistent (which will be discussed later). The fact that some modern doctors prescribe homeopathic remedies hardly suggests that homeopathy and modern medicine are consistent.

In sum, scientists are less religious than nonscientists, and more so if they are eminent. There is also a clear correlation between religiosity and the rejection of evolution. The evidence shows that religion impedes the acceptance of scientific facts. All of this suggests that there is a conflict between science and religion on a sociological level.

The Psychological Conflict

The flowering field of the cognitive science of religion (CSR) (which includes anthropologists, psychologists, and neuroscientists) aims to account for the psychological roots of religion in a scientific (naturalistic) way. Though it is very young, the field has put forth several different hypotheses for understanding (certain aspects of) religion. In a strictly logical sense, explaining religion in a naturalistic way does not exclude a supernatural origin for any religion. Any argument that particular religious claims are false because they have psychological explanations commits the genetic fallacy. Nevertheless, one can make a legitimate probabilistic argument that naturalistic explanations not only render supernatural accounts superfluous, but improbable. CSR can thus have a debunking effect on religious claims.

The core issue here is the causal mechanism used to explain religion. Traditionally, the mechanism is assumed to be divine—the inspiration of prophets or Holy Scripture, or direct communication with believers (through answered prayers, or hearing/seeing God or holy figures). Religious experiences and revelation are sometimes even used in formal arguments for the existence of God. If divine causes can be shown to be not only unnecessary, but less probable than purely naturalistic explanations, then this would undermine any claim to a religion's supernatural origin. If there is no causal connection with the divine, directly or indirectly, then religion is just as natural a phenomenon as painting or cooking, and so cannot credibly be used in an argument for the existence of God.

CSR research has shown that religious belief can be explained by natural cognitive mechanisms. Such mechanisms include anthropomorphizing tendencies (projecting human-like characteristics on to nonhuman things), propensities toward mind-body dualism (the belief that minds/souls exist independently of bodies/brains), teleological thinking (projecting purpose on to nonpurposeful phenomena), and mentalizing (ascribing minds or supernatural agency to things in order to communicate with them). These natural mechanisms bias us to find the existence of supernatural entities (e.g., gods, angels, demons, and spirits) intuitively compelling even though belief in them is not rationally justifiable. It turns out that believers indeed have a more intuitive thinking style, whereas disbelievers have a more analytic (rational, questioning) thinking style. Furthermore, spiritual experiences that were long seen as clearly supernatural, such as near-death and out-of-body experiences (NDEs and OBEs), can now (at least partially) be explained naturalistically as complex and profound hallucinations.

These natural mechanisms not only make supernatural explanations superfluous, but also fit well with our background knowledge of how the universe works, which paints a picture in which supernatural interference simply plays no role. Furthermore, these naturalistic accounts of religion have greater parsimony because one doesn't have to invoke special pleading to maintain that Christians affirm their doctrines because the one true God revealed those doctrines to them, whereas non-Christian believers affirm different doctrines due to the sorts of naturalistic mechanisms that CSR investigates. Naturalistic accounts of religion also have greater explanatory power because they don't require anyone to posit any ad hoc hypotheses, such as that of a sensus divinitatis or "sense of the divine." It is also important to note that naturalistic explanations could have utterly failed to explain religion, or that there could have been evidence for supernatural interference when a particular prophet spoke or a particular believer prayed. There could have also been evidence for the existence of brainless minds, or of souls leaving the deceased body, but of course there is none. The debunking effect of naturalistic explanations of religion (especially as part of a larger naturalistic picture) on supernatural accounts can be seen as a conflict between science and religion in the psychological domain.

The Philosophical Conflict

The last conflict between science and religion is philosophical: science has made the existence of God improbable. According to a commonly held view, this is impossible because science cannot say anything about the existence of either God or the supernatural in general. The National Academy of Sciences, for example, maintains this position. This view holds that science is intrinsically methodologically naturalistic, that is, that science can only work with natural causes and explanations. As a supernatural being, God would thus be outside of the domain of science by definition. There are multiple problems with this view, but I will restrict my comments to the supposed interaction of God with the world. If divine action occurs, evidence of it could and should be there; the absence of such evidence thus renders the existence of God improbable.

It is important to remember that on classical theism, God is not only able to interact with our natural world, but actually does so. Even if God himself transcends this world completely, his actions on this world have empirical consequences. According to Jewish and Christian Scripture, for example, God created the world, destroyed it in the Flood, sent plagues upon the Egyptian

empire, led the Jewish people out of Egypt through the desert (the Exodus) to conquer Canaan, and so on. All this should have left massive amounts of evidence, yet there is none, despite decades of relevant intensive research. According to the New Testament, Jesus was born of a virgin, walked on water, turned water into wine, and was resurrected from the dead. The crucifixion is said to have been accompanied by hours of darkness during daytime, an earthquake, and the resurrection of saints (Matthew 27). Again, though, there is no extrabiblical evidence to corroborate any of these stories, while there easily could have been. All of these miracles had to break the natural order in a way that would have been noticed by many people, and thus should have been empirically detectable. This puts all such miracle claims in the domain of science, at least in principle. There could, and in some cases should, have been evidence of God's miraculous interference in history; yet in fact there is none. Apparently, the legendary biblical days of unequivocal manifestations of the divine in this world are over.

The same point could be made about prayer. Millions of believers expect God to answer their prayers. They ask God to cure the sick, for example, a form of intercessory prayer. Millions of ill Christians still go on an annual pilgrimage to Lourdes (France) in the hope that by doing so, God will cure them. Anecdotes of miraculous healings abound, but if God really does cure people, one ought to be able to demonstrate a statistically significant effect from engaging in "distant" prayer. No such effect has ever been demonstrated, however, and not for want of trying. Research on the effect of intercessory prayer has even been published in renowned scientific journals. Although such research has not shown that prayer produces any effect, had there been an effect, it would have been demonstrated scientifically. If such an effect could not be ascribed to methodological errors and was replicated by other researchers, the implications would be overwhelming. Not only would the believer have good evidence for the efficacy of prayer, but the data would be very hard to explain naturalistically. Presumably, doctors would even have to prescribe prayer since their recommendations would be evidence-based.

A final potential case could be made for creationism. If all of the astronomical, geological, and biological evidence had confirmed the biblical stories about creation and the Flood, we would have had very good evidence for God's interference, for the truth of the Bible, and against naturalism. But in fact these stories turned out to be historically inaccurate, and are precisely the kinds of stories one would expect from people without accurate knowledge about the universe and its history. The actual history of the universe does not betray any evidence of divine intervention, even though it could have done so.

The examples mentioned above make one point very clear: there could and in some cases should have been evidence of God's interaction with our world, but there is none. Maarten Boudry, Stefaan Blancke, and Johan Braeckman therefore righty conclude: "Supernatural claims do not fall beyond the reach of science; they have simply failed." One could object that God moves in mysterious ways, or in ways that seem to be naturalistic, but are actually supernatural, or that God will not perform miracles to prove skeptics wrong. But this is simply an immunizing strategy typically used by pseudoscientists and conspiracy theorists, not a reasonable defense. One could also object that God is not a scientific hypothesis to be tested. Perhaps treating God as a hypothesis is indeed theologically or psychologically inappropriate or even absurd, but philosophically it is not, for

religions make epistemological and factual claims that can be tested empirically. When these claims can be refuted, it is justified to (tentatively) conclude that there is no God interacting with our world. The sciences have given us a naturalistic account of the world: matter-energy is ordered in certain patterns (natural laws) in space-time. Purportedly supernatural events—once omnipresent in human explanations—turned out to be natural or nonexistent.

The rational believer now has two strategies for saving the theistic (interacting) God. The first is to look further for good evidence of divine intervention. Creationists, including "intelligent design" proponents, have been trying this for decades, but without producing any convincing results. Experiments involving intercessory prayer also exemplify this strategy, though likewise without producing the hoped-for results. The consistent failure of this strategy is therefore discouraging. The other strategy is to argue that God does not directly intervene in the natural order, but is the one behind the natural order. On this view, God did not create the world in a direct supernatural way (as in the biblical narrative), but in an indirect natural way, via natural evolution, as is proposed by the theologian John Haught. The problem with this strategy is that we have no good reason to think that God is behind the natural causes of events, as an extra entity overdetermining them. Such overdetermination is logically possible, of course, but so is the view that the Greek god Poseidon is causing earthquakes via plate tectonics. Both ideas posit explanatorily unnecessary entities that can be dismissed with Ockham's razor. Therefore, this strategy does not seem particularly promising, either.

Could the rational believer reside in 'other ways of knowing,' besides science? Traditionally, revelations handed down by prophets, the experiences of individual believers (in prayer or in visions of religious apparitions), and sacred Scripture have been used as substitutes for empirical knowledge. But they turn out to be an epistemological catastrophe.

Believers in different religions make different and often contradictory claims based on their alleged revelations. Polytheistic beliefs and "revelations" contradict those of monotheists. The notion of reincarnation based on karma contradicts the notion of an eternal afterlife based on God's judgment. According to the Bible, Jesus is the Son of God, but according to the Qur'an, he is not. Not only are religious sources contradictory, but there is no defensible procedure for deciding between them, making religious disputes unresolvable. In fact, science has often invalidated the Bible in those places where it can be tested, further undermining its reliability. Historical research has also shown that the Gospels are historically unreliable. This contrasts sharply with science, which is able to validate its methods and sources, and has provided us with a great deal of reliable knowledge, as well as many practical applications.

While caught up in the minutiae of detailed theistic arguments and claims, the general trend is too easily overlooked: the supernatural (theistic or otherwise) has historically given way to the natural. Before the scientific revolution, the origin of the world was held to be supernatural, and according to the Bible, diseases and misfortune were the result of supernatural causes. The Bible was held to be a more or less infallible revelation from God, and the stories in it were generally taken to be historical. Divine intervention was widely accepted. All of this changed so radically in the past few centuries because of science. No scientific discipline appeals to supernatural explanations and causes anymore because all previous supernatural explanations have turned out to be false or

unfruitful. Cosmology, astronomy, geology, biology, neuroscience, and psychology have shown that our origins are natural; the supernatural stories have been superseded. This is the most profound conflict between science and religion.

Conclusion

The simplistic and naïve version of the science-religion conflict thesis is historically false and has indeed been superseded, but that is untrue of the version presented here. I have shown that science and religion conflict in at least four different domains. In the historical domain, the doctrinal content of religion has become less and less tenable as science has progressed. In the sociological domain, scientists are much less religious than nonscientists, and religious believers often overtly reject science on religious grounds. In the psychological domain, advances in the cognitive science of religion have undermined the tenability of supernatural accounts of religion. Finally, the discoveries of science have made the existence of God and other religious claims improbable, while religious 'ways of knowing' are independently highly problematic on their own. Science paints a naturalistic big picture of the world at the expense of the supernatural, leaving religion with much to fear from scientific progress. The believer who wants to take science seriously has to dismiss religious claims about factual matters and concede that science has made classical theism untenable.

Religious Attitudes toward the Disabled by Michael Moore

One can readily find evidence of the low regard that various religions have for the disabled. Like religious misogyny (or "hatred of women": see Kramer & Moore, 2002), prejudicial practices against the disabled often have doctrinal justification. In this essay I (a) cite scriptural sources for these attitudes, (b) describe some of the discriminatory behaviors associated with them, and (c) sample some of the apologetics used to deal with obvious conflicts generated by purportedly kind and merciful belief systems that not only tolerate, but actually encourage, exclusionary actions. I realize, of course, that the sources that I have searched often contain different messages, some of which contradict the messages I highlight. My concern is not so much the inconsistency between the various scriptures, but the ability of believers to find a scriptural rationalization for practically any behavior.

Jewish attitudes toward the disabled rely on strict biblical injunctions against the participation of the physically handicapped in bringing sacrifice: "none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, or who is a hunchback or a dwarf, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles" (Leviticus 21: 17-20). Or consider Exodus 4:11: "Who gives man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?" The latter has served as the scriptural basis of the main monotheistic religions' belief in a divine source for all afflictions. According to Tzvi Marx (2002), Halachic literature (the body of Jewish religious laws) "reveals instances of apparent indifference, or even callousness, with respect to the disabled: laws and liturgical passages that appear to evince a dismissive, even derisive attitude toward individuals with disabilities" (p. 1). Marx saw in this attitude "an internal ambivalence," a "dissonance within the

halakhic culture itself," in view of the disabilities of major figures in Jewish thought: "Isaac, who is blind, Jacob, who limps; the initially childless matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel, and the speech-disabled Moses—are no less esteemed because of disability" (p. 2).

In his highly influential Guide for the Perplexed, the 12th-century Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides offered an apologia for the harsh strictures of the Pentateuch:

A priest who had a blemish was not allowed to officiate; and not only those who had a blemish were excluded from the service, but also ... those that had an abnormal appearance; for the multitude does not estimate man by his true form but by the perfection of his bodily limbs and the beauty of his garments, and the temple was to be held in great reverence by all. (1919/1194, p. 357)

The Hindu doctrine of Samsara connects individual differences to actions performed in a past life. Mental and physical suffering "is thought to be part of the unfolding of karma and is the consequence of past inappropriate action (mental, verbal or physical) that occurred in either one's current life or in a past life" (Whitman, 2007). Hindu mythology often portrays people with disabilities negatively, such as the blind king Dritarashtra and the lame Shakuni, both of whom appear as cruel and evil. And Lord Vishnu declared that disabled people have no place in Heaven and refused to wed Lakshmi's disfigured sister, arranging her to marry a tree (World Bank, 2007).

All of this received wisdom inevitably influences the behavior of believers toward the disabled. Before 1928, handicapped individuals in India could not inherit property. Yet the abolishment of legal discrimination (Nagpal, 1983) has not changed social norms. In a 2007 World Bank survey in India, around half of the respondents believed that "disability was always or almost always a curse of God." The survey also showed that people with disabilities attended around half of social and religious functions, and often found themselves discouraged from attending marriages. The behavior of clergy provides another indication of intolerance of disabled individuals: According to Punbit (2013), "extremist Hindu temples have started a drive to deny entry to disabled people."

In his defense of belief in the karmic origin of disabilities, professor of comparative religion Arvind Sharma relied upon what Lawrence Kohlberg characterized as the lowest level of moral reasoning (one typical of young children): that one's behavior should be dictated by the need to avoid punishment (Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1984). According to Sharma, a belief in karma "commends warm-hearted concern to minimize the [disabled] person's problems, even though caused by his or her own actions in the past. Otherwise, according to that same law of karma, when we find ourselves similarly disadvantaged, we will ourselves be so treated, and will have deserved such treatment by our own callousness" (Sharma, 1999).

An identical account appears in Buddhism:

The blind of this world bear a heavy burden for past failure to tell the way clearly to travelers. Some people's mouths are very misshapen. They blew out lamps on the Buddhas' altars. To be deaf and mute is a dreary existence. Reward appropriate for scolding one's parents. How do people get to be hunchbacks? They berated and laughed at those bowing to Buddhas" (Buddhist Text Translation Society, n.d.).

Having been exposed to such texts, many Buddhists have a negative attitude toward the disabled. According to one survey of Japanese Buddhists, "68% of people with disability say they have experienced discrimination," and "the vast majority of people without disability feel that individuals who have a disability are treated like second-class citizens" (Stevens, 2013, p. 32). Sallie B. King reached a similar conclusion:

Popular understanding based on the idea of karma has provided a rationalization for people to turn their backs on the disabled.... This interpretation of karma has been so common that modern reformers in countries like Japan bitterly blame Buddhism for much of the super-added suffering of disabled people beyond the physical suffering directly caused by their disabilities—their rejection by society, their treatment as pariahs, and the lack of interest in helping them. (2009, p. 163)

Contemporary Buddhists feel embarrassed by the cruelty of the karmic doctrine and the subsequent ill-treatment of the disabled. Richard Louis Bruno, a disabled Buddhist psychotherapist, solved this dilemma by doing two quite different things. First, he disassociated himself from the basic concept of "karmic punishment" by writing that some Buddhists (unlike himself) "believe in reincarnation and say that what happens to you in this life results from the circling back of your own actions from previous lives" (Bruno, n.d.). Second, he collected quotes from a few disabled persons, some of whom share his opinion:

"I believe my accident (and its consequences) is a result of something I'd done (or didn't do), or because of something I didn't handle properly, in a past life. I now get another chance to 'do it right.'" (Bruno, n.d.)

"It is really unproductive to think about past lives.... We have more than enough to handle dealing with this one." (Bruno, n.d.)

"When we accept that everything animate and inanimate is 'already broken,' a physical disability—even a terminal illness—loses its abnormality. Actually, anything that is not broken, not 'disabled,' is really abnormal." (Bruno, n.d.)

Khun Kampol Thongbunnum expressed an attitude similar to these in a short poem:

Most people Live in suffering Without knowing Only when happiness Gradually fades away That suffering Shows its face Then and there Not perceiving suffering One consequently fails To find the way out And to get rid of suffering Once and for all.

(Thongbunnum, 2010)

I empathize with the pain and desperation of the disabled, and I applaud their use of a wide variety of psychological defense mechanisms to make their lives easier. The disturbing aspect of these statements concerns not the disabled, but the able-bodied, who learn to blame the victims for their plight and to feel not only physically but morally superior to them.

Christian attitudes toward the disabled not only receive scriptural justification from the verses quoted from the Hebrew Bible above, but from Matthew 9:2, 7 (also in Mark and Luke), where Jesus heals a paralyzed man by forgiving his sins: "Some men brought to him a paralyzed man,

lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, 'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.'... Then the man got up and went home." Another fable casts doubt over a simple "sin leads to disability" formula, for in John 9:1-3 we read: "As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.'" Two important points about Jewish and Christian attitudes toward disability are exemplified here. First, popular belief among first-century Jews parallels that found in the karmic views of the far-Eastern religions described above. Second, Christianity accepts that God aggrandizes himself at the expense of mortals.

Several later sources that are revered by Christians reinforce the view that God punishes humans with disabilities. Canon 22 of the Lateran Council (an ecumenical council of the Roman Catholic church) of 1215 avowed:

Since bodily infirmity is sometimes caused by sin, the Lord saying to the sick man whom he had healed: 'Go and sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee' (John 5:14), we declare in the present decree and strictly command that when physicians of the body are called to the bedside of the sick, before all else they admonish them to call for the physician of souls, so that after spiritual health has been restored to them, the application of bodily medicine may be of greater benefit, for the cause being removed the effect will pass away. (Mar, 1996)

In The Order for the Visitation of the Sick (Mant, 1816), we find the following passages:

Are you persuaded that your sickness is sent unto you by Almighty God?

An altered wording conveys the same message in the currently used Book of Common Prayer:

Whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God's visitation.

In 1958 the Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church declared: "It is cruel and false to brand every sufferer as a sinner: much suffering and sickness is due to the sin either of other persons or of society in general" (McDonald, 2013).

A different twist involves the introduction of a new character, the Devil. This move discredits the above quoted declaration in Exodus 4:11 by subscribing to a dualistic cosmology. For instance, around 419 St. Augustine wrote that "many are born deformed, many diseased, many horrible and monstrous.... Yes, even baptized infants are at times subjected to attacks by demons, in addition to other evils of this life" (419/1957, p. 339). Martin Luther concurred:

I maintain that Satan produces all the maladies which afflict mankind, for he is the prince of death. St Peter speaks of Christ as healing all that are oppressed of the devil. He not only cured those who were possessed, but he restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, strength to the paralytic; therefore I think all grave infirmities are blows and strokes of the devil (Luther, 1566/1997, p. 275, #593).

Walter Bachmann (1985) summed up the results of this long list of deprecations: "It is doubtful if the handicapped have ever, in any other cultural domain in human history, been more wronged and despised or treated with greater intolerance and inhumanity, than in Christendom" (p. 442).

Apologists did not delay. An early apologetic attempt by the apostle Paul not only accepted, but invited and adulated, suffering: "Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" (Romans 5:3-4). A website run by the Christian Apologetics Alliance uses simple logic to prove its point, ignoring the logical contradiction between the following syllogism and much of what appears above: "God values people. People with disabilities are people. Therefore, God values people with disabilities" (Schmoll, 2014).

Some formulae bear obvious similarity to the apologetics offered by other religions above: "The Christian understanding of human nature is that we are damaged, wounded and disabled by sin. That's just the way things are" (McGrath, 2012, p. 170). (For the dangerous consequences of seeing ourselves as defenseless or worthless, see Moore & Kramer, 2000.) On a Christian Biblical Counsel website, June Hunt answered the question, "Are there Blessings from Afflictions?" as follows: "When blasted by the winds of adversity, the heart that is sheltered in the hands of God still produces a life that is full of meaning and purpose" (Hunt, n.d.) She also offered more detailed justifications, such as "Suffering softens your heart toward obeying God's Word," or "Suffering uncovers your heart's weakness so that Christ is your strength" (n.d.).

David J. C. Judson defended the above cited stricture in Leviticus 21:17-20 (and confirmed in the Code of Canon Law—see Vatican, 1983): "I feel this is no reflection on the handicapped person, but rather a wonderful reminder of the holiness and whole-ness of God" (Judson, 1975, p. 778).

At first glance Islam's approach to the disabled appears benign. For example, on the Why Islam? website Saulat Pervez describes two cases where the prophet Muhammad behaved decently toward disabled persons, adding that "These examples are important because they show that even though the Prophet, pbuh, was sensitive to their particular circumstances, he did not consider these to be things which should stand in their way of leading normal lives" (Pervez, 2014). But a closer look reveals a different attitude, one that reinforces an association between physical disabilities and disbelief in the dogma. Such a mindset is more than sufficient to provide scriptural justification for those who choose to disparage the disabled:

"Those who reject our Signs are deaf and dumb, - in the midst of darkness profound: whom Allah willeth, He leaveth to wander: whom He willeth, He placeth on the way that is straight" (Koran 6:39).

"But whosoever turns away from My Message, verily for him is a life narrowed down, and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgment" (Koran 20:124).

"Such are the men whom Allah has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight" (Koran 47:23).

While these verses may well have used deafness and blindness symbolically, they nonetheless ridicule those who suffer these adversities. The results speak for themselves: "Outside the Circle," a report by child rights organization Plan International and the University of Toronto, describes

the horrific scale of discrimination and abuse faced by children with disabilities in West Africa [which is 70% Islamic]. This includes shocking reports of infanticide and trading in body parts of

children with disabilities.... [C]hildren with disabilities are subject to profound levels of poverty, exclusion and discrimination in a region marked by deprivation and harmful practices rooted in traditional beliefs (Kumar, 2013).

Amar Alam notes the "unprecedented levels of prejudice and discrimination" mentally disabled individuals suffer at the hand of Muslims, attributing this attitude to the "prevalent belief among Muslims ... that intellectual disabilities are caused by mental illness, possession by Jinns, supernatural phenomena and punishment for previous sins" (Alam, 2014). Similarly, Ayse Ciftci, Nev Jones, and Patrick W. Corrigan (2012) surveyed the literature on the stigma of mental health in Muslim communities and found that in addition to discrimination and ostracism, mentally disabled Muslims also suffer from lack of professional treatment due to their families' unwillingness to report their condition.

Muslim apologists differ little from the apologists of other religions when it comes to defending contemptuous attitudes toward the disabled. Shaykh Abd al-Rahmaan al-Barraak, a Saudi scholar who recently issued a fatwa sanctioning the killing of advocates of gender mixing at work and in education, wrote an essay on why Allah created mental disabled people, a question that he answers as follows: "His perfect wisdom decrees that He creates opposites.... He created His slaves with differences in their bodies and minds, and in their strengths. He has made some rich and some poor, some healthy and some sickly, some wise and some foolish. By His wisdom, He tests them, and He tests some by means of others, to show who will be grateful and who will be ungrateful" (al-Barraak, n.d.).

Scott Thompson takes a different line: "If a person suffers from a physical handicap or disability, he has some special talent to compensate for it, whether he is aware of that talent or not. For this reason, disabilities are regarded as tests from God, designed to allow the disabled person to show his character and his own unique gifts" (Thompson, n.d.). Wasif Islam offers a similar justification: "[B]eing disabled is a test from Allah in this life, and therefore can be a blessing in disguise. Every disabled person should be patient and live up to this challenge. Allah promised those who observe patience a great reward in the Hereafter" (Islam, 2009).

And if none of these justifications work, one can always fall back on this old chestnut from a fatwa issued by al-Barraak:

People are incapable of comprehending Allaah's wisdom. He cannot be questioned as to what He does, while they will be questioned. Glorified and exalted be He. Whatever you understand of His wisdom, believe in it, and whatever you cannot understand, say, 'Allaah knows best and is most wise, and we know nothing except that which You have taught us, and He is the All-Knowing, Most Wise.' (al-Barraak, n.d.)

I have shown that the followers of the above-mentioned religions can find in their sacred texts ample grounds for looking down upon the disabled, for excluding them both socially and physically, and for endorsing the pernicious idea of blaming the victim. In an edited volume dealing with the three monotheistic religions' approach to disability, Darla Schumm and Michael J. Stoltzfus reached a similar conclusion:

While religious attitudes and responses to disability are quite diverse, it is not uncommon for Jewish, Christian, and Islamic perspectives to mimic the medical model by connecting disabling bodily conditions with individual spiritual deficiency. There is a persistent tendency to associate disability with individual sin. Well-meaning people from multiple religious traditions often struggle to offer religious explanations and religious solutions to the "problem" (Schumm & Stoltzfus, 2011, p. xiv).

Religions tend to have a highly stratified social structure, where the bottom level consists of rank-and-file believers. But this level also has their own punching bag: What better target than the weak, the different, the minority, and the disabled. A significant source in shaping one's self-esteem is comparing oneself to others; the pervasive phenomenon of social comparison provides one with a perception of relative standing. Evaluating oneself by finding faults in others offers a fool-proof method for gaining some sense of self-esteem: Just find someone who is worth less than you, and if you can't find one, create one! This is the mechanism behind belittling: Gaining illusory ascendance by disparaging others, saying or implying that they are unimportant, ineffective, or unsuccessful (Kramer-Moore & Moore, 2012, p. 127). al-Barraak makes this crystal clear: "When the sound believer sees disabled people, he recognizes the blessing that Allaah has bestowed upon him, so he gives thanks for His blessing, and He asks Him for good health" (al-Barraak, n.d.)

The Presumption of Atheism Revisited - Charles Echelbarger

Antony Flew's "Theology and Falsification" has become one of the most widely discussed articles on contemporary philosophy of religion. Many anthologies and textbooks included it, and continue to include it today. Twenty years ago it was republished on the occasion of its Golden Jubilee anniversary. Its republication and the responses to it seem to bear out what many have suspected about the fate of the article. It seems to have acquired a reputation as an example of a wrongheaded use of a contemporary empiricist criterion: falsifiability in principle. In the article, it seemed to many that Flew was trying to apply the principle to theological statements such as "God exists" or "God loves us." To understand why it seemed he was doing so, consider the following passage:

Now to assert that such and such is the case is necessarily equivalent to denying that such and such is not the case. Suppose then that we are in doubt as to what someone who gives vent to an utterance is asserting, or suppose that, more radically, we are sceptical as to whether he is really asserting anything at all, one way of trying to understand (or perhaps it will be to expose) his utterance is to attempt to find what he would regard as counting against, or as being incompatible with, its truth.... [A]nything that would count against the assertion or which would induce the speaker to withdraw it and to admit that he had been mistaken must be part of (or the whole of) the meaning of the negation of the assertion.

It has been repeatedly stated by its most famous proponent, Karl Popper, that this idea was not originally designed to be used as a criterion of cognitive significance, even though some philosophers who learned about it from reading Popper's works tried to use it in that way. In his 1962 book Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge (especially in chapter 1) Popper explains forcefully that he meant for it to be used a means of demarcating the class of statements that can belong to science from the class of statements that couldn't belong to

science. He did not mean for it to be used to distinguish cognitively significant from cognitively meaningless statements and argued against doing so. However, it has yet to be clearly demonstrated that being unfalsifiable never can affect any statement's putative cognitive status. I will return to this point much later in this paper in regard to the status of theological statements. The main part of this paper, if it succeeds in its aims, will make it clear that Flew's basic idea in "Theology and Falsification," though flawed, is more important than has often been supposed and still highly relevant to current discussions in the philosophy of religion.

In his 1985 article "The Burden of Proof," Flew refers specifically to Popper's philosophy of science and denies that he (Flew) was using falsifiability as a criterion of meaning any more than was Popper. Flew then tries to explain why the charges of misusing the criterion of falsifiability are false. He says:

What I was doing there was developing a challenge to believers ... to begin to make clear, not least to themselves, what it was they were asserting.... [T]he particular meanings being attributed to the utterances by particular utterers must depend upon what several answers these several persons took to be appropriate. This contention is itself an immediate consequence of that note's sole general thesis about meaning: the tautology that any proposition must be equivalent to the negation of its own negation.

Flew states that it is not "necessary in order to be in a position to make individual judgements about meaningfulness and meaninglessness, to cleave to any comprehensive theory of meaning." He adds:

As for the alleged need to develop and defend a general theory of meaning before attacking any particular questions of significance, this is surely a classic case of putting the cart before the horse. For, were we truly unable to answer questions of this sort without reliance on such a theory, we could never test whether any theory was adequate to the facts which it was supposed to explain.

This part of Flew's position on the use of the idea of falsifiability is tolerably clear. Consider an analogous position in regard to making ethical judgments. One need not have a fully developed theory of normative principles in order to make responsible and justified judgments about the rightness or wrongness of particular actions. Rather, our normative principles need to be developed in such a way as to at least capture our most strongly held moral judgments about particular cases of actions or circumstances. Flew says that what he was doing in his 1955 "Theology and Falsification" was pointing out that those who make theological assertions ought to explain whether they are falsifiable or not and, if not, explain how that fact does not have disastrous consequences for the meaningfulness of those assertions. Raising that issue with regard to those specific assertions does not necessarily mean that Flew was then assuming that falsifiability was the criterion of factual meaning or even a necessary condition of factual meaning. Flew could not plausibly deny that his own sympathies with contemporary forms of empiricism would make some such criterion of meaningfulness attractive to him. But that point is not directly relevant to the charge of taking falsifiability as a meaning criterion for granted.

What is still not clear is Flew's claim that the kind of challenge he was making to those particular utterers is an immediate consequence of the logical principle of double negation. The relation of

logical equivalence between any proposition and the negation of its negation is based on the purely truth-functional notion of negation. So, the tautology in question merely states that it is necessarily the case that any conditions in which a proposition is true are the same conditions in which the negation of its negation are true. But this fact does not seem to have anything to do with the meaning of any statement. How does it follow from the fact that p is logically equivalent to not-not-p that anyone who knows the meaning of p must know the meaning of not-p? Was Flew saying that anyone who knows what the conditions are in which p is true must know what the conditions are in which p would be false? Or, was he saying that anyone who knew what it would be like for p to be true must know what it would be like for p to be false? Or, that anyone who understood "p" would be able to state some conditions in which p would be false? Or, to state some conditions in which p could not be true?

Perhaps some of these as well as other questions about Flew's aims in "Theology and Falsification" might be answered by examination of and reflection on another of Flew's writings, "The Presumption of Atheism," chapter 2 of his God, Freedom, and Immortality. In the main part of this paper, I will critically examine some issues that are raised in that later chapter. In "The Presumption of Atheism," Flew introduced a distinction between what he called two types of atheism: positive atheism and negative atheism. He expresses a preference for negative rather than positive atheism. One goal of "The Presumption of Atheism" is to justify this preference. Flew defines positive atheism as "the assertion that there is no such being as God." He defines negative atheism as having a meaning that results from the prefixing of the Greek particle "a-" to "theism." This meaning can be made precise by comparing the meanings of other terms that have the same prefix, e.g., "atypical," "asymmetrical," and "amoral." Thus, a negative atheist is simply one who is not a theist, or someone without a belief in God. Flew is not the only philosopher in the literature of the philosophy of religion attracted to negative atheism. One prominent example of such a philosopher is Michael Martin.

There seem to be strong prima facie objections to defining "atheist" as a negative term. Theodore M. Drange has objected to Martin's version of negative atheism in the following way:

First, it is not completely clear that the correct translation of the Greek prefix "a" is "without." It might also mean "no," in which case "a-the-ism" could be translated as "no-god-ism," or "the view that there is no god."... Second, even if the etymology of the word "atheism" did indicate that it once meant "without belief in God," that is still not a good guide to current usage.... It seems far more important what people mean by a word today than what it once meant a long time ago.

...[I]t could be said that I (and most people) use the term "atheist" in the sense of "positive atheist." [Third] [i]t should be noted that all positive atheists are automatically negative atheists, which may sound somewhat peculiar when those expressions are used.

One may add a concern to Drange's objections. Does Flew help his case is by including "amoral" in his list of examples that he wants us to compare with "atheist"? The term "amoral" is not just logically and semantically opposed to "moral," it has the sense of "neither moral nor immoral." If one is guided by that comparison, is a negative atheist, then, someone who is neither a theist nor an atheist? Thinking on this question may incline one to suggest that what Flew really means by a

negative atheist is simply what most people mean by "agnostic." But Flew firmly states that the sort of negative atheism he wishes to defend is not what is ordinarily meant by "agnosticism." He suggests that what T. H. Huxley originally meant by "agnostic" when Huxley invented the term is close to his notion of a negative atheist, but I will not pursue that lead here. Flew does clear things up somewhat when he writes:

[F]ollowing the present degenerate usage, an agnostic is one who, having entertained the proposition that God exists now claims not to know either that it is or that it is not true. To be an agnostic in this ordinary sense, you have to have conceded that there is, and that you have, a legitimate concept of God; such that, whether this concept does or does not in fact have an application, it theoretically could. But the atheist in my peculiar interpretation, unlike the atheist in the usual sense, has not as yet and as such conceded even this.

Perhaps the comparison of "atheist" with "amoral" is more helpful than it initially seems to be. Unlike the agnostic in Flew's sense, an amoral person is not someone who has considered the evidence for being moral or not being moral and then found the evidence inconclusive for either alternative. An amoral person is someone who has no grasp of morality in the sense of culturally embedded customs and practices. He/she does not specifically reject morality. One who does that would more properly be called an immoralist. Yet an amoral person is not a moral person either because of lacking any understanding of morality. An amoral person is neither moral nor immoral in the sense just presented. Perhaps Flew is comparing atheism to amorality as we have just explained it. An atheist, in the negative sense, is one who neither affirms nor denies that theism is true or false because he/she does not see that there is even a legitimate concept of God, given the way that the concept has been presented in the tradition known as classical theism. I will return to this suggestion later in this paper.

Still, one may share Drange's misgivings about construing atheism as a negative concept. In order to take the idea of negative atheism seriously, one must supplement Flew's characterization of it. As it stands, it is an inadequate characterization of any sort of atheism because it makes all sorts of things atheists, with ridiculous results. For example, it makes atheists of newborn babies, amnesiacs, profoundly retarded people, and dogs. Some may be so determined to defend this conception of atheism that, unlike me, they are willing to accept such consequences. Unlike Flew, I will try to construct an enhanced version of negative atheism that does not have such consequences. I suggest that what is needed is to construe negative atheism as a kind of epistemic stance that can be justifiably taken. Part of this construal would, accordingly, be that a negative atheist is not merely someone who lacks a belief in God. A negative atheist is also someone who knows very well that he/she lacks such a belief. But even more than this must be added. Further additions will be suggested in the next few paragraphs.

The main thrust of Flew's argument for adopting negative atheism is related to what he thinks is a matter of good methodology in designing the way that a fair debate about the existence of God ought to proceed. Such debates, he argues, ought to be designed by analogy with civil trials in the English common law tradition, in which there is a presumption of innocence for the accused. This presumption entails that the plaintiff bears the burden of proof. Should the arguments of the prosecution fail, the proper verdict will not be "innocent" but, simply, "not guilty." Flew maintains

that in a debate about the existence of God there should be a presumption of atheism. Theist debaters should, therefore, bear the entire burden of proof by presenting arguments for the existence of God. The atheist debater should only be presented with ample opportunity to destroy the arguments of the theist and, thus, turn back attempts to defeat the presumption of atheism.

Part of Flew's reason for advocating this approach is not difficult to make out. Under a presumption of innocence, the accused is not required to concede anything that might help the prosecution. For example, the accused is not required to concede at the outset, e.g., that he/she could have committed the crime, that he/she knows anything about the crime, that a crime of some sort occurred, etc. Similarly, Flew maintains, no atheist should be required to concede at the outset of a debate that there might be evidence for the existence of God, that theism is at least possibly true, or even that there is a legitimate concept of God. Consequently, the theist in the debate should bear the entire burden of proof in the debate, "first to introduce and defend his proposed concept of God; and, second, to provide sufficient reason for believing that this concept does in fact have an application."

The existence of God, Flew argues, is an issue that is not in the same class as the issue of the existence of the Loch Ness Monster or an Abominable Snowman. In those cases, there is no controversy over the concepts of the entities in question. Not so in the case of the existence of God. It is conceding more than an atheist should be required to concede to grant (even tacitly) that "even the would-be mainstream theist is operating with a legitimate concept which theoretically could have an application to an actual being." To allow the legitimacy of only positive atheism in a debate about the existence of God is, therefore, to concede more than the atheist ought to be required to concede because positive atheism presupposes that the concept of God that the theist operates with is a legitimate concept. So, Flew's position is that the very conditions of a fair debate fully justify taking a position of negative atheism and, by that very fact, placing the whole burden of proof on theism.

There are other philosophers who insist that there is no burden of proof on atheism and that the onus of proof lies entirely on theists. Michael Scriven and Norwood Russell Hanson have taken such a position. However, they do not do so for the same reasons that Flew gives.

Scriven says:

If there is no evidence which points to a particular claim, although some general background considerations make it not too unlikely that something like this should be true (Loch Ness monster, mile record broken twice in 1980) we should say there is some general support for the claim, we shall say it is wholly unfounded if there is no evidence for it in particular and no general considerations in its favor and disprovable if it implies that something would be the case that is definitely is not the case.... [B]oth 'unfounded' and 'disprovable' correlate with atheism....

Recalling that to get even a little evidential support for the existence of a Being with supernatural powers will require that the little be of very high quality (little does not mean "dubious"), we see that the failure of all the arguments, that is, of all the evidence, will make even agnosticism in the wide sense an indefensible exaggeration of the evidential support.

Scriven, however, has no doubts about the legitimacy of the concept of God. In essence, he says that, if we can argue successfully (as we have) that the evidence supports claims of the existence of beings with less than human power, such as various prehistoric lifeforms, then there is no reason why one could not argue, from some body of evidence, that there are beings with powers greater than those of human beings. Scriven says, "If such a Being exists, we might or might not be able to go on to argue that it is infinitely powerful, etc."

So, Scriven says that we should reject claims that God, by his nature "transcends merely human categories of thought.". Scriven's strategy in building a case for atheism is to define a being he calls "Basic God"—who is inferior to the God of classical theism—and then to show that the evidence for the existence of even Basic God is drastically insufficient. If atheism in regard to the existence of Basic God is justified, then atheism in regard to the God of classical theism is, he claims, certainly justified.

Hanson's position is quite similar to Scriven's. Hanson finds it altogether peculiar and puzzling that so many people seem willing to admit that there are no rational grounds for theism but then, in apparent triumph, issue a challenge to atheists to prove that God does not exist. In one sense of "proof," Hanson states, it is trivially obvious that there can be no proof of the nonexistence of God. But in this same sense of "proof," there can be no proof of the nonexistence of fairies, goblins, or unicorns, either. This sense of "proof" is deductive proof: i.e., arguments with true premises that contradict the negations of their conclusions. But this sense of "proof" is not even the one that is usually meant by the term "proof." Here Hanson reminds us that:

[P]roof of the non-existence of X usually derives from the fact that there is no good reason for supposing that X does exist.... [T]he lack of any formal deductive proof that God does not exist provides no reason whatever for supposing that God does exist.... [A] proof that God does not exist turns on no more than the demonstration that there is no good reason for supposing that he does exist.... [I]f atheism is erroneous, it is so in the manner of claims like "Boston is south of Miami" and "Eagles outweigh elephants".

At one point, Hanson seems to come close to stating doubts about the concept of God that recall the doubts at which Flew hints:

[T]he reader must be able to cite some actual happening, some genuine experience, some de facto description of events which would be relevant to the conclusion that God exists. Because if no such factual description, however rich and subtle, and theologically sophisticated, could even be germane to further confirming the claim "God exists" for a believer, then it could never be reasonable for him to believe in God's existence.

Hanson goes on to insist that some factual data must be relevant to confirming the claim that God exists if "God exists" is to have any semantical content.

But Hanson clearly thinks that some factual data would be relevant to confirming the claim that God exists, and he even gives some (vivid) examples of events which, were they to occur, would go a long way toward confirming this claim for him. So, Hanson does not have any doubts about the actual cognitive meaningfulness of the claim. Given the lack of factual evidence for the claim,

Hanson observes that the only other way of circumstantially strengthening the case for theism would be for something like the traditional arguments for the existence of God to succeed. Of course, Hanson thinks that they do not succeed and that they have been so thoroughly discredited (even by many theologians) that atheism is the only reasonable alternative left. Given the fact that there are also no empirical facts that provide good reasons for theism, Hanson says, one is by that very fact justified in denying the existence of God just as, on similar grounds, we are justified in denying the existence of unicorns. Hanson argues that the sort of agnosticism that allows that theism could be confirmed, but that the evidence for it happens to be insufficient, must avoid making the mistake of then going on to deny that atheism can be confirmed by any possible body of evidence. It is confirmed by the very fact that theism has little or no general or particular rational support. His argument for the justification of atheism thus shows how he puts the entire burden of proof on theism.

We may call positions like those of Scriven and Hanson unburdened positive atheism. It seems to me that the main difficulty for their versions of atheistic argument strategy is explaining why positive atheism should not have to bear any burden of proof of its own. It is one thing to reject demands for deductive proofs of atheism. It is quite another to maintain, as Scriven and Hanson do, that atheists have fully justified their position just by demonstrating the lack of evidential support for theism.

Even if one accepts the claim that demonstrating the lack of evidential support for theism provides some justification for atheism, there is still some point to the demand that the positive atheist also provide other, distinct reasons for atheism given that this burden has been placed on theists. In part, one must have an appropriate reply to those who will raise some sort of demand for basic fairness. Why, it will be asked, should theists have to do all of the work in the debate? Such a demand would reveal a certain misunderstanding. It should go without saying that any atheist debater will have plenty of work to do just in making effective replies to the arguments for theism.

Still, one may argue for a burden of proof for positive atheism as follows: Arguments for a claim ought to be distinct from successful criticisms of arguments for a claim's contradictory. Many atheists have in fact produced arguments for positive atheism that are not specifically destructions of arguments for theism. For example, some atheists have argued that a naturalistic metaphysics is inconsistent with theistic metaphysics, and then presented arguments in defense of the superiority of a naturalistic metaphysics. Examples of defenses of naturalistic metaphysics include arguments for purely physicalistic theories of mind, as well as arguments that naturalism is more likely to be true than antinaturalistic metaphysics given the fact of the evolution of all life forms by natural selection. Clearly, unburdened positive atheists should explain why they need not bear any such burden of proof. After all, there are positive atheists who have taken on just such a burden. Flew seems to be opposed to accepting this sort of position and part of his reason for his opposition is specifically related to insuring basic fairness in a debate about the existence of God. In order to understand his opposition fully, we need to take some of his other explanations into account.

Flew says that there are clear differences between "presumption and "assumption." Arguing a case under a presumption of innocence does not mean assuming at the outset that the accused is innocent. To see why it does not have this meaning, consider the fact that a trial that rendered a

verdict of "guilty" would show that an assumption that the accused is innocent was a mistake. The same verdict would not in any way show that a presumption of innocence was a mistake. Flew argues that, in the same way, the presumption of atheism "is neutral as between all parties to the main dispute, in as much as to accept it as determining a procedural framework is not to make an substantive assumptions." However, he warns the reader that debating under a presumption of atheism for the reasons he presents "puts the whole enterprise of theism in a fresh perspective that makes it even more difficult and precarious than it did before."

Flew does clearly explain why theists bear the whole burden of proof in a debate about the existence of God. Given his negative version of atheism, the atheist has no belief to defend. The negative atheist is simply one who lacks belief in God. The atheist makes no knowledge-claim with respect to the issue of God's existence at all. He does not deny the existence of God. Hence, he cannot be required to prove that there is no God, even when he is engaged in the debate. It is the theist who makes a knowledge claim insofar as a theist participates in a debate about the existence of God, The theist is not merely someone who professes belief in the existence of God. In a debate, this belief must be defended and justified by some sort of positive argument. Merely lacking a belief need never be justified unless it can be shown that one ought to have that belief. All of us lack an enormous number of beliefs but we are certainly not required to justify each and every one of these doxastic absences. It has to be shown, in each case why one ought to have this or that belief. It cannot be one's epistemic obligation to justify not having a belief that p merely because one does not have the belief that p. This point, Flew explains, follows from the usual distinction between true beliefs and knowledge. It is the theist who not only has the belief but insists that he knows the proposition he believes. Thus only he must give reasons for it.

In a later contribution also titled "The Presumption of Atheism," Flew makes a helpful restatement of the position he presented in the earlier chapter 2 of God, Freedom, and Immortality titled "The Presumption of Atheism." In particular, he makes the analogy between the presumption of innocence in English common law and the presumption of atheism much clearer than it was in the earlier version. He distinguishes three elements in the analogy:

"[I]n both of these contentions about the burden of proof, the word 'proof' is being used in the ordinary, wide sense in which proofs embrace any and every variety of sufficient reason."

Both presumptions are defeasible: "they are, consequently, not to be identified with assumptions. The presumption of innocence indicates where the court should start and how it must proceed."

"Because these are not assumptions but contentions about the burden of proof, that people succeed in proving what they were challenged to prove does not even begin to show that the burden was wrongly placed upon their shoulders."

For the sake of clarity, it is worth quoting Flew on this final point at length:

To adopt a presumption about the burden of proof is to adopt a policy. And policies have to be assessed by reference to the objectives and the priorities of those for whom they are being proposed. Thus the policy of presuming innocence is rational for all those for whom it is more important that no innocent person should ever be convicted than that no guilty person should ever

go free.... [T]he objective by reference to which the policy of accepting the presumption of atheism has to be justified is the attainment of validation of knowledge about the existence and activities of God, if such knowledge is indeed attainable. The inquiries pursued under this procedure are directed either toward acquiring such knowledge or showing who, if anyone, is already possessed of it.... The presumption requires us to begin by examining any proposed or presupposed conception of God as if we were meeting it for the first time; considering, that is to say, whether it is coherently applicable and, if so, inquiring what evidencing reasons would be necessary and sufficient to establish that it does in fact have application.

In order to support his claim that a presumption of atheism is neutral as between all parties, Flew he gives an impressive example of a theist who he says readily accepted a presumption of atheism in the very same spirit of fairness that Flew wants to insure. The theist in question is Thomas Aquinas. Flew calls attention the fact that an integral part of Aquinas' procedure in presenting his five supposed proofs for the existence of God is to first pose objections to the thesis that God exists, objections that Aquinas himself formulates. The proofs are then presented as replies to these objections.

The first of these objections reads:

It seems that God does not exist. For if of two contrary things one were to exist without limit the other would be totally eliminated. But what is meant by the word 'God' is something good without limit. So, if God were to have existed, no evil would have been encountered. But evil is encountered in the world. Therefore, God does not exist. (Summa Theologica I, Q2, art 3)

This argument for atheism is Aquinas' way of presenting the traditional problem of evil. In the same article Flew also calls attention to the second of the objections that Aquinas formulates:

Furthermore, what can be accounted for by fewer principles, is not the product of more. But it seems that everything that can be observed in the world can be accounted for by other principles, on the assumption of the non-existence of God. Thus natural effects are explained by natural causes, while contrived effects are referred to human reason and will. So there is no need to postulate the existence of God. (Summa Theologica I, Q2, art 3)

Notice that, in both objections, Aquinas presents arguments. In the first objection, he presents an argument of the modus tollens type that purports to be a direct refutation of theism. The other argument, presented in the second objection, is not one that purports to be a direct disproof of theism. It is an argument that theism is not the only reasonable explanation of what may be observed in the world, and that another explanation of the observable facts, one available to naturalistic atheists, may appear to be sufficient to account for the same facts. Furthermore, the argument directly implies, since theism requires assuming more principles than atheism does, it may appear that explanations available to atheists are more reasonable than those available to theists. Aquinas' replies to these two objections are of two sorts. The reply to the first objection proceeds by trying to show that one of the premises (if God were to have existed, no evil would have been encountered in the world) is false. The reply to the second involves an attempt to show that not all natural effects can be explained by natural causes and thus that explanations consistent with atheism are insufficient to account for the observable facts.

Flew seems to think that one of his strongest points, given Aquinas' procedure, is that no one could accuse Aquinas of beginning with an assumption that God does not exist. All that one could reasonably interpret Aquinas to be doing is adopting a presumption of atheism as part of a methodology of argument, even though he obviously is aiming at making the strongest possible case for theism.

But Aquinas' strategy seems to be the following: Begin by presenting the strongest known arguments for atheism without actually endorsing those arguments. Then refute those arguments. Last, argue for theism. Is this the same procedure as the one Flew means by adopting a presumption of atheism? There is some resemblance in that Aquinas certainly does not endorse the arguments stated in the objections. We might say that what Aquinas does in the objections is to display specimens of atheological arguments in order to make it clear what sort of task faces a theist who wants to show that theism is more reasonable than atheism. Moreover, it is clear that Aquinas accepts a burden of proof for theism. Finally, it does seem that Aquinas wants to show that theism can be decisively defended even when the most powerful kinds of atheological arguments are given the privilege of being stated at the outset. All of these facts support the interpretation that Aquinas adopts a presumption of atheism as a methodological procedure. It is plausible to interpret Aquinas as trying to make his case for theism even more powerful than it would be if he simply presented his supposed proofs. He may well have thought that the case for theism is more powerful when it is first shown that atheism fails even when it is given the rhetorical advantage of putting its best foot forward at the very beginning of the debate.

However, is the sort of atheism against which Aquinas argues the same sort of atheism that Flew advocates? Since these arguments for atheism are (as one might say) displayed as specimens of atheological arguments, it is clear that the sort of atheist that Aquinas aims to defeat is, in Flew's terms, a positive atheist. So, if Aquinas adopts a presumption of atheism, it seems that it is positive atheism to which he grants the presumption. Aquinas seems to be imagining an opponent who presents arguments for the proposition that God does not exist. He is not imagining a task of simply presenting theological arguments to a person who just lacks a belief in God.

One who favors Flew's approach, faces two questions, the first having two parts.

Question 1:

Can there be arguments of any sort in support taking an epistemic stance of negative atheism?

If so, what conclusion would one be trying to support when one does not deny that God exists but simply lacks a belief in God?

If there can be such arguments, what arguments could there be for taking the stance of negative atheism that would not simply be arguments for positive atheism?

It is in the context of these questions (which Flew does not explicitly raise) that Flew's comments on Aquinas' objections become particularly significant. He points out that, in Aquinas' second objection, the specimen atheological argument makes use of a principle of postulational economy and that by introducing this principle into the dialectical exchange, "Aquinas ... indicates a reason for adopting" a presumption of atheism. This principle is one that is to be used in comparing the

merits of alternative explanations of the same facts. The specimen atheological argument alleges that naturalistic explanation is epistemically superior to theistic explanation because it makes use of fewer principles.

Apparently, Flew is claiming that one can give reasons why negative atheism deserves a presumption in a debate. One reason, Flew seems to be saying, is that, standard principles of evaluating the merits of alternative explanations, e.g., postulational economy, seem to favor not using theism as any part of an explanation of matters of observable matters of fact. One who lacks a belief in God would, of course, not even formulate such explanations. Thus, a kind of justification for the stance of negative atheism is possible even though it is not an argument for the proposition "God does not exist." So, questions 1(a) and 1(b) seem to be answerable from Flew's perspective, even though Flew does not seem to perceive that such questions need to be asked, let alone perceive that answers to them need to be provided.

But the answers I have suggested are not entirely satisfactory, and Flew's comments on Aquinas' second objection reveal the reason why these answers will not do as they stand. Flew says:

What is perhaps slightly awkward for present purposes is the formulation of the first objection.... It would from my point of view have been better had this first objection referred to possible difficulties and incoherencies in the meaning proposed for the word "God." Unfortunately, it does not, although Aquinas is elsewhere acutely aware of such problems. The changes required are, though important, not extensive.

The awkwardness that Flew is referring to is related to the question of the sort of atheism to which Aquinas grants a procedural presumption. It seems to be positive atheism because the specimen atheological argument is one having the conclusion "God does not exist." To take the stance of negative atheism, Flew has stated, is to proceed in the debate as if one simply lacked a belief in God.

Flew imagines a variation on Aquinas' specimen atheological argument from evil that refers to "possible difficulties and incoherencies in the meaning proposed for the word 'God.'" The variation would refer to the detection of an "ostensible" incoherence, "not in the proposed concept of God as such, but between that concept and "another element in the theoretical structure in which it is normally involved," namely an ostensible incoherence between the idea of a creator on whom creatures depend completely, continually and absolutely and the idea of those creatures being sufficiently autonomous for their faults not to be also and indeed primarily the creator's fault.

This view of God as creator of such creatures may be, as Flew says, essential to theism. It may indeed be a problematical view of the nature of creation. But to speak of an ostensible incoherence between the traditional theistic idea of creator and the traditional idea of his creatures is quite different from speaking of an ostensible incoherence in the meaning proposed for the term "God." The difficulty Flew is pointing out would better be classified as an ostensible inconsistency between two ideas rather than an ostensible incoherence in one idea.

Flew's case would be supported much better by leaving Aquinas' specimen arguments behind and illustrating some convincing examples of ostensibly incoherent concepts. Indeed, he should

provide examples of palpably incoherent concepts that may seem initially to be coherent. After all, that is one his main reasons for preferring a stance of negative atheism for debating purposes. One ought not even to concede at the outset that "God" has a coherent meaning. Conceptual incoherence is not to be confused with propositional inconsistency. Propositional inconsistency is possible only when the propositions in question are at least capable of having truth-values. If a term is found to express an incoherent concept then it is not a term that is capable of serving as the subject of a proposition because the result of putting the concept into the empty part of a propositional function would be something incapable of having any truth value. (Example: "Triangular odors are noisy.")

In his 1990 paper "The Case for God Challenged," Flew takes Kai Nielsen to task for not taking enough care to "show how some term or expression may be in some way immediately intelligible while remaining nevertheless ultimately incoherent." Flew even goes so far as to charge Nielsen with having been "reckless" for not having protected himself against the charge that enormous numbers of people have not known what they were talking about when they used the word "God." Flew then gives what he thinks would be good examples of such terms. He cites Leibniz's example of such a term: highest conceivable speed. He also cites Leibniz's argument that, before demonstrating the existence of God, it is first necessary to demonstrate that the concept of God as a logically necessary being is coherent. Flew seems to cite the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation as "strictly senseless" on the grounds that it would be impossible to identify any substance by anything other than its accidents.

Later, he cites "person without a body" as another example of a candidate for ultimate incoherence only to withdraw this choice on the grounds that tension apparent in applying this term to human beings might be overcome in the special case of God. Then, Flew announces there are difficulties he does not think can be overcome: those of reconciling certain of the defining characteristics of the theistic God with features of the universe in such a way that God can be not only perfectly good but also the creator and sustainer of the universe. Once again, Flew seems to vacillate between what ought to be classified as cases of implicitly contradictory expressions and expressions lacking an ultimately coherent meaning.

Once we reflect on this point, we may arrive at an understanding that is better than what Flew provides of how the presumption of atheism may be justified, where it is a stance of negative atheism that is taken for debating purposes. One may justify taking this stance without thereby producing arguments for positive atheism. The way to do so, I suggest, is by presenting justified doubts about the cognitive status of the statement "God exists."

Such doubts need not be of the kind that refers to evidence that puts the truth of a proposition in doubt, i.e., reasons sufficient for denying that the proposition is true or for suspending judgment as to its actual truth-value. One may instead have reasons for doubting whether a given statement expresses a proposition at all, without presenting these reasons as premises of an inference to a conclusion that the statement does not express a proposition. Rather, they may be reasons that justify doubting whether the statement expresses a proposition. Another example of such a doubt would be a doubt as to whether the statement has any definite truth-conditions. One may have unresolved and justified doubts, for example, as to what the truth-conditions of "x is a timeless

agent" could be, without needing to show, necessarily, that the term is simply a truth-functional contradiction, a category mistake, or other kind of logically deviant expression.

These doubts would be of a sort that make one uncertain as to what the semantical content of a statement might be. In this way, we may led to realize that such doubts explain how a stance of negative atheism need not be a sort of pretense adopted for the purpose of trying to gain the maximum advantage for oneself in the context of a debate. Flew's defense of negative atheism and the justification of its presumption is in great need of this sort of supplementation. It may seem, in spite of the analogy with the presumption of innocence, that it is mainly an attempt to gain maximum advantage for the atheist in debates with theists.

Fortunately, in some later publications, Flew provides what may serve as examples of arguments that I have suggested may be used to justify doubts about the cognitive status of a proposition, but I will only briefly allude to some of these arguments to illustrate. He argues at length, for example, that the notion of a disembodied or bodiless person is either flatly contradictory or unintelligible. Core issues of personal identity and the possibility of identification play a central role in his argument. Moreover, Flew points to the fact that there is an ancient and ongoing controversy even among the most sophisticated of philosophers and theologians over whether the term "God" has an intelligible meaning. In view of the fact that the God of classical theism is himself a bodiless person, a general doubt as to the intelligibility of classical theism may be and has been produced from other (familiar) arguments over whether a human person can exist in a disembodied state. The existence of such disagreements are themselves grounds for being consciously noncommittal on the intelligibility of the term. On a more popular level (famously discussed by Descartes, Flew notes), it may be observed that people's religious views seem to vary mostly according to custom and tradition, rather than according to rationally constructed arguments and definitions. There are many cases of people who believe radically different things about the meaning of key religious terms, even though they may be equally rational and highly advanced in their learning, and they are well aware of each other's beliefs and doctrines.

It may be pointed out in response to this suggestion that these are not arguments justifying doubts about a concept's intelligibility—they are psychological explanations of how one's doubts have been caused. It seems to me that they could be both justifying reasons and causally explanatory reasons. (Compare: "I don't trust him because he always acts so sneaky.")

According to Flew, the presumption of atheism not only puts the burden of proof on the theist, but also puts on the theist the burden of providing an account of the concept of God that makes its conceptual coherence manifest. According to my suggestions, the policy of this presumption need not be one that is demanded by one who is using a purely self-serving pretense adopted for the special purpose of a debate about the existence of God, or by one who is simply ignorant or naïve. One may take the epistemic stance of negative atheism even if one has no intention to ever take part in a debate about the existence of God. And one may do so even if one is not innocent, ignorant, or naïve about what has been said or written by theists.

Indeed, if I am right, Flew's own position implies this approach to adopting negative atheism. The very experience of becoming familiar with the claims, definitions, and metaphysical theories of

classical theism is more than sufficient to provide one with abundant reasons for doubting whether "God" is semantically coherent or intelligible as it occurs in these contexts. Clearly, Flew himself does have just this type and degree of familiarity with the literature of theism. This sort of experience of becoming familiar with this literature and of talking with theists who may earnestly and sincerely try to explain and justify theism to nontheists may well cause one to have doubts about the intelligibility of the term "God." However, as I have suggested, the features of theological discourse that may have this effect also provide one with reasons that justify having such doubts.

These reasons need not be reasons that reflect philosophical naïveté. One need not (and Flew does not) embrace a simplistic sort of verificationist criterion of the meaningfulness of factual statements to have justified doubts about the intelligible content of theological assertions. There is, of course, a vast literature on this subject, too. When one has become familiar with even a small part of this literature, it is quite apparent that there is widespread disagreement about even the most elementary conditions of the meaningfulness of factual assertions. But the existence of this further disagreement should not be of any comfort to theists, or to positive atheists. It is, however, another source of reasons that justify the kinds of doubts about the semantics of "God-talk" that I have suggested makes negative atheism a tenable epistemic stance.

If I am right about this suggestion, then it is altogether fair and reasonable to approach the issue of the existence and activities of God, as Flew did seventy years ago, by beginning with the question to theists of what would have to happen to make anyone logically and rightly conclude that God does not love us or that God does not exist at all. To ask this question is not to employ an empiricist criterion of meaning. It is simply to proceed under a presumption of atheism that entails a burden of proof exclusively for theism. Part of this burden is to explain that the concept of God is coherent or intelligible. Those who have doubts as to whether this concept is coherent ought to have some justification for such doubts, and I have argued, in agreement with Flew, that such doubts are justified.

An important connection between the issue of coherence and falsifiability would seem to be that statements involving incoherent concepts would be unfalsifiable, for the obvious reason that there can be no conditions under which they would be true. Statements that are unfalsifiable may have this property for more than one reason. Conceptual incoherence may be only one reason for a statements' being unfalsifiable. But it seems to be a useful method to begin by inquiring into the possibility of falsifying a statement and then diagnosing the reason of its being unfalsifiable.

It may be that in the case of theological statements, the reason they are unfalsifiable is undetected conceptual incoherence. One who employs this method and obtains such results will still have some important work to do. One job to explain how enormous numbers of people could use such a concept for a very long time without realizing that it is incoherent, and use it with the attitude that it is coherent. Such a project is beyond the scope of this paper, but it does seem that if the matter of justifying a presumption of atheism comes down to producing explanations of this sort of phenomenon, then significant progress in philosophy will have been made, because these will be explanations that are essentially social and psychological. That is the way that philosophy has progressed for the last 2000 years—by handing over its problems to the sciences that it helps to bring into being.

There are those who classify themselves as atheists on the grounds that all putative statements containing the term "God" are neither true nor false because they are unintelligible or conceptually incoherent. These philosophers are quick to point out that, for this very reason, they must not be classified as positive atheists since neither the assertions nor denials of unintelligible statements are either true or false. This may be called a noncognitivist version of atheism, and it may also be said to be a version of negative atheism.

If one says that "God" is a contradictory concept, then, whatever one says about God will be vacuously true if it has the form "(x) (x=g→p)" because the antecedent will be necessarily false. Does this result coincide in a nonaccidental way with the unfalsifiability of God-talk? Perhaps only in an oblique way. Everything one can say about God is vacuously true if the concept of God is contradictory. But vacuous truth is not the same as unfalsifiability. Unfalsifiability results from the degree of ad hoc qualification made for God-statements by theists. Yet the two fates of theological assertions are oddly parallel.

Speculation: covert incoherence of concept makes it psychologically possible and easy to introduce ad hoc qualifications to prevent falsification.